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PlayStation®

The ial Magazine

Issue 043 March 2011

PlayStation - The Official Magazine Issue 43 (March 2011)

WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW

TOP SECRETS to dominate online

The sharpest shooter on PS3 has arrived

SUPERHERO SHOWDOWN
Which cape will rule your PS3?

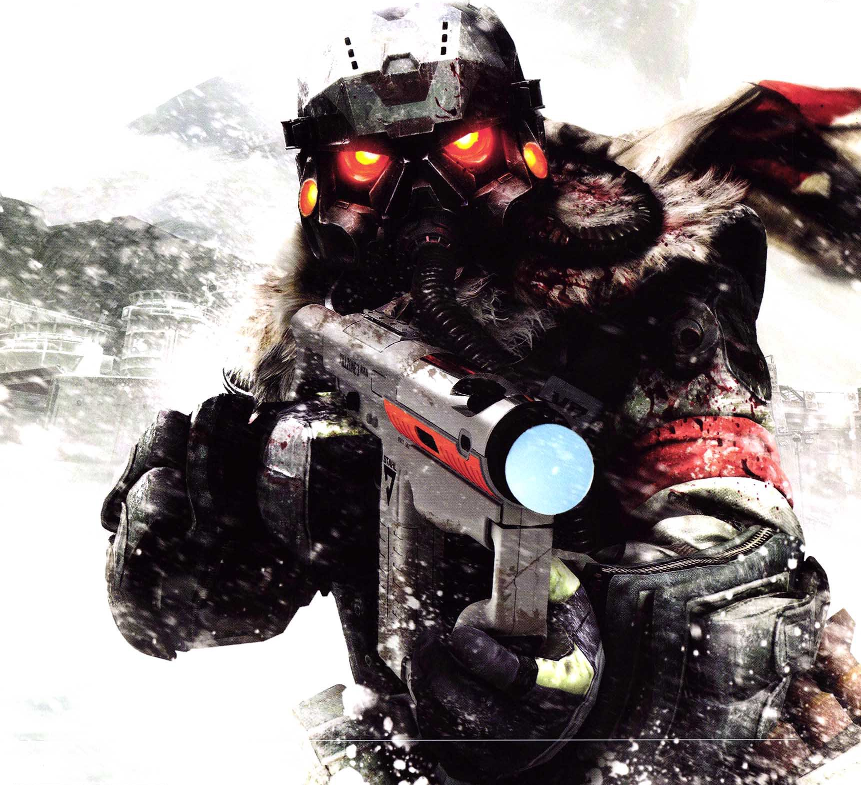
MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 3 reviewed!

HANDS-ON
MOTORSTORM APOCALYPSE

Future
MEDIA WITH PASSION

PS3 PlayStation®3 PlayStation®Network

Play With Confidence Using



MATURE 17+ ™
M
Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Strong Language
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3D Compatible Game

PlayStation®Move COMPATIBLE

The PlayStation®Eye camera (sold separately) is required to use this product. Killzone® © 2010 SCEE. Developed by Guerrilla. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks and "PS3" and the PlayStation®Network logo are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All games featur publishers and/or licensors. "SONY" and "make.believe" are trademarks of Sony Corporation. PS3 system software v3.30 or higher, HD 3D television with compatible 3D active glasses and highspeed HDMI cable (sold separately) required for 3D features. Visit www.us.playstation.com/support/3D for details.Blue

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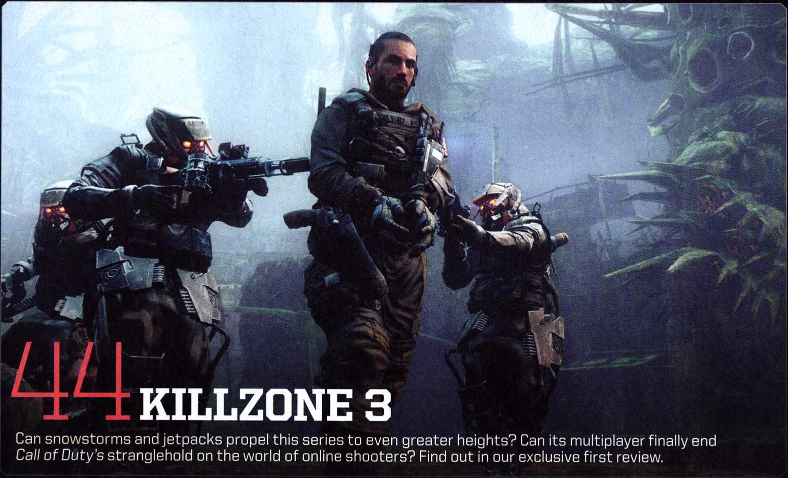
COVER FEATURE



44 **KILLZONE 3**

Can snowstorms and jetpacks propel this series to even greater heights? Can its multiplayer finally end *Call of Duty's* stranglehold on the world of online shooters? Find out in our exclusive first review.

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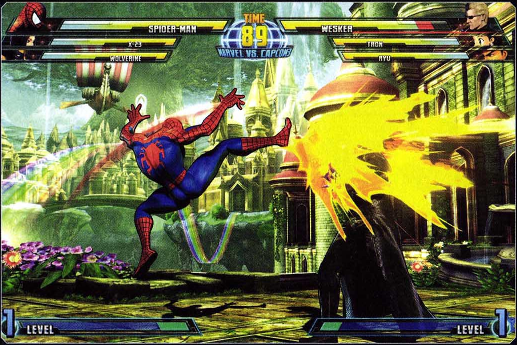

70 MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 3

Spoiler alert: It's very good. We've already started assembling trios of fighters in our minds: The Street Fighter team, the Avengers team, the team where every character is green...

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74 TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED 2

Race cars, rule the world. Sounds like a pretty sweet deal, right? Not exactly.

Super Power

We can be heroes, for more than just one day

This issue is all about heroes. Some are cartoonish, with boisterous abilities and screen-filling powers; others are subdued, relying on subtle flaps of cloth to communicate in a lonely desert. Some are resourceful, using their diminutive stature to stack their way into bigger and bigger buddies; others are larger than life, gods among men, calling forth heavenly powers to smite their foes. But no matter what shape or style they come in, all have one thing in common: They are us.

Indeed, this issue's colossal collection of heroes represents everything I love about videogames. No matter what the fantasy, no matter what my mood might be, I can find the perfect escape on my PS3. I can retreat from my workaday life, if only for a few hours, and don the tights, the cape, the flak jacket, the jetpacks, whatever—and roam the world dealing justice as I please. From our stunning coverstar—the utterly amazing *Killzone 3*—to our review of *Marvel vs. Capcom 3*, our featured roundup of Marvel and DC games, and our sneak peeks at the heroes of tomorrow, including Nathan Drake and Duke Nukem, this issue is chockablock with colorful (and *playable*) characters.

Speaking of heroes, one note about *DC Universe Online*. Those looking for our review will have to wait another month. Since MMOs are all about the interactions of a massive community, we thought it unfair to give a final verdict before we could go questing with the rest of you. For now, though, we've got an opinionated tour of *DCUO* on page 58. Enjoy!

GARY

Gary Steinman
Editor in Chief
twitter.com/TinyManRages

Gary Steinman
Editor in Chief
Chief editor Gary Steinman apologizes for PTOM's overabundance of awesomeness. Well, not really. He just wants to seem as if he's humble.

Greg Orlando
Executive Editor
Plucky ne'er-do-well Greg Orlando was recently voted most likely to be crushed 'twixt the gears of life's cruel machinery. No recount is forthcoming.

Ken Bousquet
Art Director
This is Ken Bousquet. We can't thank him enough for his great art. We're sorry we had to chain him to his desk to ensure he never ever (Not ever!) leaves us.

Roger Burchill
Managing Editor
Supereditor Roger Burchill would like to inform everyone he is not, in fact, in the habit of making monkeys, but rather training them.

Scott Butterworth
Associate Editor
When the steel chair of injustice strikes Scott Butterworth against the back, rest assured, he will call upon the power of the Butterworthians to defeat evil.

Anne Lewis
Editorial Intern
Young Anne forms one-half of PTOM's female bloc, a delightful beet salad to our grizzled plate of rocks, unpleasantness, and, also, monosodium glutamate.

Christin Chi
Designer
Rumors that Christin Chi emits a pleasant smelling and lemony-fresh scent when it is time for cake have yet to be disproven.

BioTron 6625
Robotic Bio-Writer
BioTron 6625 is a clinking, clattering collection of anger and resentment. But at least it's not a cardboard box with a pinwheel in it, as BioTron 4400 was.

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Inside Qore Episode 34

Here Be Dragons!

One name gets role-playing gamers salivating like dogs at dinnertime: BioWare. The veteran RPG studio bites back into fantasy with *Dragon Age II*. This month, we peek into the title by talking with developers and playing through massive quests. *InFamous 2* is building into another fantastic follow-up, partly because of its bold music. We go on location to Skywalker Ranch to showcase the musicians and their soundtrack. Then, see why *Crysis 2* is gunning for the honors as the best-looking FPS yet, and do anything to win urban races in *MotorStorm: Apocalypse*.

VERONICA BELMONT HOST OF QORE

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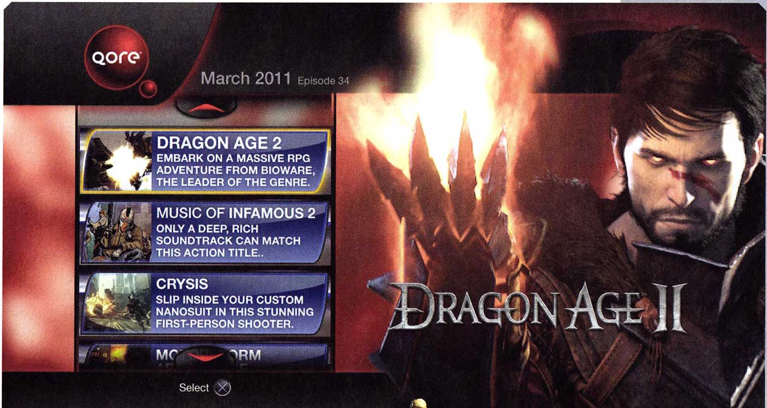

March 2011 Episode 34

DRAGON AGE 2
EMBARK ON A MASSIVE RPG ADVENTURE FROM BIOWARE, THE LEADER OF THE GENRE.

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Dragon Age II
Grab your chain mail and a sharp sword for this outstanding adventure.

The Music of InFamous 2
The lush soundtrack rises and booms, matching Cole's destructive wake.

Crysis 2
Sure, visuals aren't everything... but have you seen these graphics!?

MotorStorm: Apocalypse
Outfit your urban vehicles for speed and destruction.

jackass 3 unrated
LOSE

Upcoming Blu-ray and Games releases
Audrey sets her sights on the hottest Blu-rays this month!

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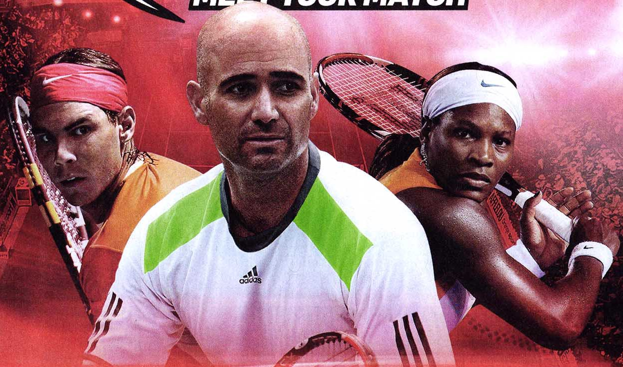
Individual episodes can be purchased for $2.99 and a 13-episode subscription can be purchased for $24.99. Qore subscribers have access to Betas, demos, themes, and additional downloadable content each month.

CONTENT SUBJECT TO CHANGE

2K SPORTS

TOPSPIN 4

MEET YOUR MATCH



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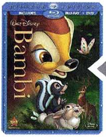

MAR. 01

***Bambi* Out on Blu-ray**

Yes, we cried when Bambi's mom died.

--

In stores: *Fight Night Champion, EDF: Insect Armageddon, Man vs. Wild, Michael Jackson, PS Move Heroes*

02

Dr. Seuss' Birthday

We will all be eating green eggs and ham today, which sounds gross to us, but is necessary to celebrate Dr. Seuss' birthday.

03

If Pets Had Thumbs Day

Frankly, this day scares the crap out of us. We're pretty sure if Mr. Stinklebottoms had opposable thumbs he would stab us to death for giving him a stupid name.

07

Happy Birthday Pam

Jenna Fischer is the sexy receptionist we all wish worked in our office, but since she doesn't we will have to admire her from afar and send creepy birthday cards.

08

In stores: *Dragon Age II, Homefront, MLB 11: The Show, MLB 2K11*

09

Mardi Gras

There's a long history behind Mardi Gras, but no one remembers it. All we know is Beads + Alcohol = Rated M for Mature.

11

Don't Panic Day

Following on the heels of Panic Day, which is March 9, is Douglas Adams' birthday, who taught us we'll be fine if we carry a towel. RIP, Doug.

13

Daylight Savings Time Begins

This is when we turn the clocks forward and lose an hour of sleep, right? That seems both annoying and like too much work, so we think we're going to skip it.

15

Beware the Ides of March

We're certain none of us are going to be stabbed repeatedly. Then again, Greg has had a crazy look in his eyes lately.

--

In stores: *Top Spin 4, Yakuza 4*

17

St. Patrick's Day

It's the best reason to drink: because we feel like it. Oh, and it's St. Patrick's Day.

20

Extra-terrestrial Abduction Day

Extraterrestrial abductions are no joke. They happen to us quite often. It must be because we're so interesting.

22

Kirk's Birthday

Many years from now Captain James T. Kirk will celebrate his birthday. Today we honor this by enjoying the awesomeness that is *Star Trek*. On Blu-ray, of course.

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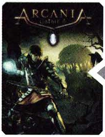
The Simpsons

Lousy Smarch weather!



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In stores: *Arcania: Gothic 4, NFS: Shift 2 Unleashed, Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters, WWE All-Stars*

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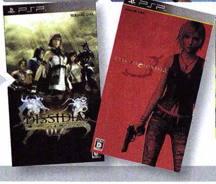
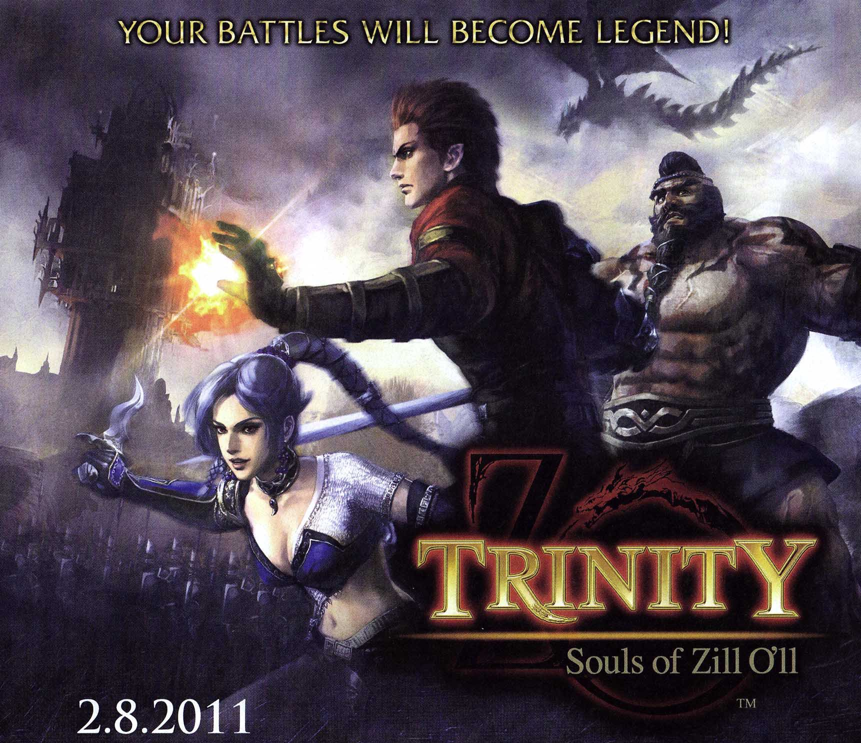
In stores: *Dissidia 012[duodecim]: Final Fantasy (PSP), The 3rd Birthday (PSP)*

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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

Pit Stop

The race is on, but GT5 gets more performance boosts.
▸▸Page 12

Off the Charts

We start digging to discover Drake's Deception.
▸▸Page 16

Ex Factor

The leader of the Human Revolution speaks out.
▸▸Page 20

Home Alone

Prepare those restraining orders. We go stalking in Home.
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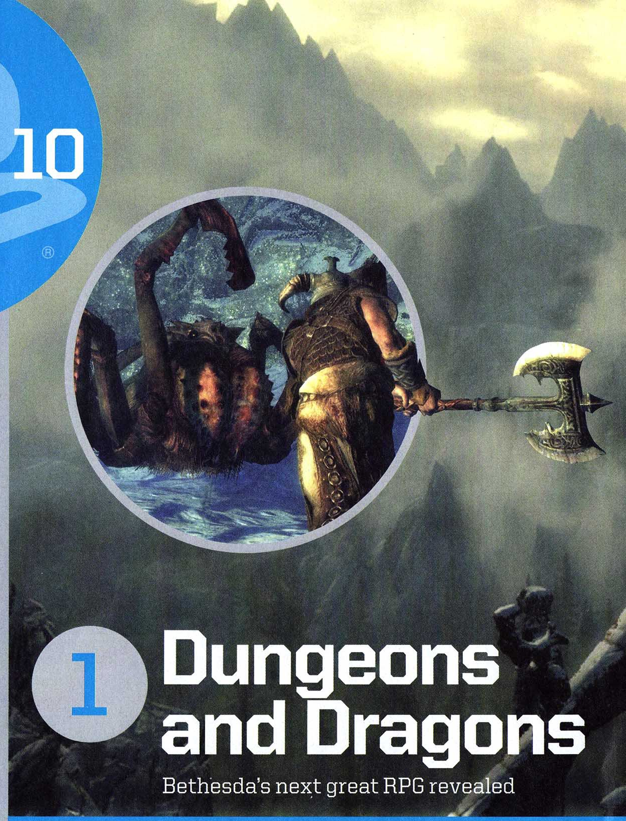
The Great Debate

Marvel vs. DC: A battle of superheroic proportion.
▸▸Page 24



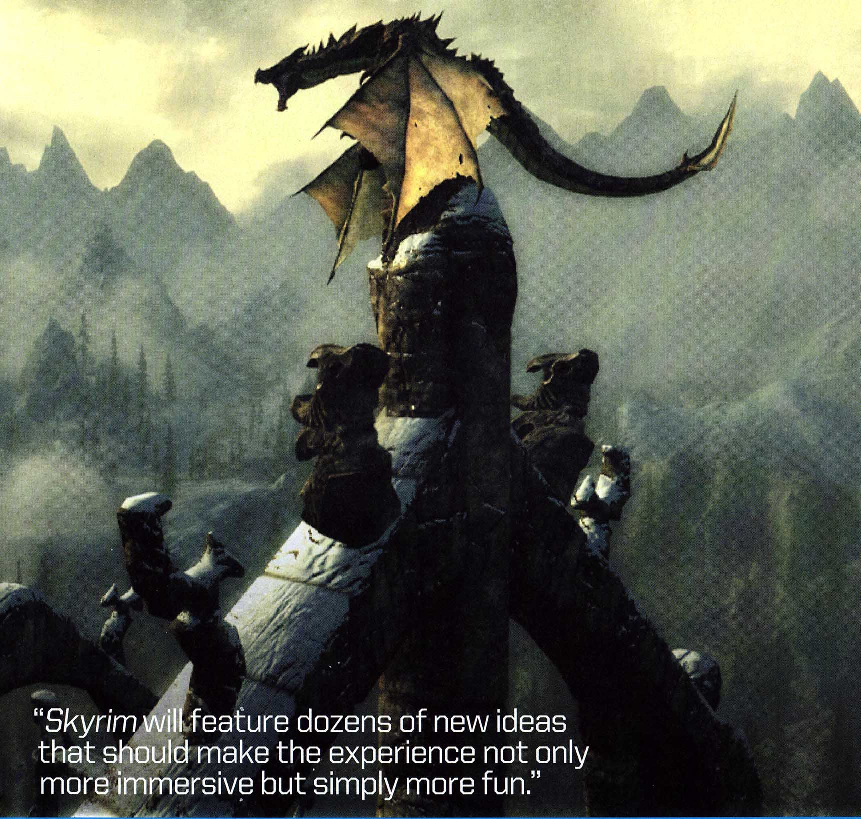
1 Dungeons and Dragons

Bethesda's next great RPG revealed

Imagine a *Fallout 3* where absolutely everything about the game has been improved, from the combat to the conversations to the very engine the game runs on. Now add a few dragons, a healthy dose of magic, and a fresh coat of Nordic mythology. Congratulations, your brain just invented *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim.*

The first release in three years from venerable role-playing game experts Bethesda Softworks, *Skyrim* is a direct sequel to its previous *Elder Scrolls* title, *Oblivion*, which, despite being the deepest, most engrossing fantasy-action game this side of *World of Warcraft*, struggled to find a following on the PS3 after starting life as an Xbox 360 exclusive.

Fortunately, there'll be no such exclusivity nonsense this time around, and *Skyrim* will benefit from all the groundbreaking ideas that made *Fallout 3* such a success. *Oblivion's* class system, for example, is out. Rather than hard selecting a character type, adventurers develop any of the 18 available skills as they play and earn *Fallout*-style perks to level up, which should accommodate both classic archetypes (thieves, mages) as well as more specialized roles.



“*Skyrim* will feature dozens of new ideas that should make the experience not only more immersive but simply more fun.”

Far more important, however, *Skyrim* will feature dozens of new ideas that should make the experience not only more immersive but simply more fun in general. Some are simple: duel-wielding weapons and magic, one-button fast travel around the map, the ability to forge custom weapons at a blacksmith's shop. Others are much more involved: when players engage someone in conversation, that character will continue to move and act as they would in real life rather than stopping to face the camera in awkward interview-style.

Side-quests and missions will be dynamically altered to fit a player's previous experiences. If, for instance, a player is tasked with rescuing a hostage, the game might place that hostage in a dungeon that the player has not yet visited (don't worry, enemy encounters will be scaled to match the player's level so one won't simply be decimated by pumped up goons). Other missions might be customized to suit a player's particular skills or past actions. Say we kinda-sorta killed a shopkeeper—the family member that inherits his shop might resent us and be reluctant to enlist our help in future quests.

As far as the story goes, *Skyrim* takes place a full 200 years after the conclusion of *Oblivion*. In that time, a civil war has erupted, dragons have returned to the fictional realm of Tamriel, and the Nordic god Alduin has decided he'd like to destroy the entire world. As the realm's last remaining dragon hunter, players must thwart all manner of mythical creatures and attempt to save the world not only from supernatural evil but also from itself. We're guessing everything works out fine in the end, but, alas, we won't know for sure until the game hits store shelves this November.

2

Time for Mods

Multiple patches planned for Gran Turismo 5

After five years of work on an 11-year-old template, *Gran Turismo 5* remains unfinished. That's the opinion of Polyphony Digital's main man Kazunori Yamauchi, who said recently he considers *GT5* a "work in progress."

Speaking via Twitter, Yamauchi promised to add a host of features, or at least consider adding them, at some point between now and, er, the end of the universe. Okay, we're being unkind, but the online game shipped in an incomplete state—and Yamauchi is keenly aware of it.

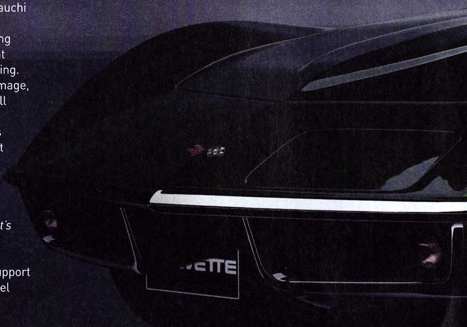
Polyphony has already released a patch making mechanical damage an option, along with weight and maximum power restrictions, for online racing. Players can choose either light, self-healing damage, or a far more deadly heavy option. Previously, full damage was unlocked only at level 40, while the end credits roll at level 15. Full damage remains available only on premium cars, which represent 20 percent of the 1,031-car total.

Yamauchi expects to add online lounge functions, such as a way for hosts not to get locked out of their own races while choosing a car. It's still way behind key rival *NFS: Hot Pursuit's* friend-tracking Autolog system, but at least Yamauchi is listening. And acting. Albeit slowly.

The Japanese developer is also working on support for the popular, four-year-old Logitech G25 wheel and its year-old G27 replacement.

Other possible, but not confirmed, tweaks to existing *Gran Turismo* elements include adding rewards to online races, a button to switch off the heads-up display, and doing something about the incredibly-LEGO-edged shadows, for which Yamauchi blames the camera angles. Certainly the problem would be solved if the camera wasn't actually pointing at the shadows.

GT5's YouTube upload feature may return too, having been pulled before release for consuming too much memory and taking too long to render. In contrast, Codemasters' *Dirt 3* offers a near-instantaneous version. Alternatively, Yamauchi may continue work instead on his rule-obeying free-roam mode (we're calling it "C-Spec"), where players drive around at the speed limit, obey traffic laws, and possibly even get out and walk. It may seem as if we're joking, but we're not.



3 Combat Ready

What we know about the new Call of Duty and Battlefield games

Battlefield 3

It's Modern Combat
The introduction of Vietnam to *Bad Company 2* says the next *Battlefield* will return to modern warfare. Is it going to be another *Bad Company*? If so, we hope single player improves to sit next to the brilliant multiplayer.

There'll Be a Beta
Those who bought the *Medal of Honor* limited edition will be given first dibs on the *Battlefield 3* multiplayer beta. Our guess is it won't be live until autumn, but DICE does like to launch trials early, so it might be sooner.

DICE is Making It
This is an obvious, but crucial, point. DICE made the multiplayer (or a good bit of it) in *Medal of Honor*, and has learned from that experience. Nobody does multiplayer as DICE does, so expect this to be the new *Battlefield's* focus.

Co-op Play is Likely
Having experimented with co-op in *Company 2's* onslaught mode, we expect it to be standard in *Battlefield 3*, even if it's included within another horde-style mode instead of as an extension of the main story campaign.

New Modes Possible
Players need more than just Rush and Conquest modes. Anticipate fresh maps, new modes similar to Objective Raid, and a return for popular *Company 2* stages such as Arica Harbor and Isla Inocentes.

Call of Duty 8

It's Modern Combat
Yeah, a no-brainer, because we're expecting *Modern Warfare 3*, right? The Activision tradition of switching between Treyarch's pre-modern war games and Infinity Ward's modern ones is unlikely to change in 2011.

Infinity Ward is In
Despite high-profile losses, the developer is still going. The engine is solid, so all the team needs to do is finish the story. Will it be its last *Call of Duty*? Expect it to finish *Modern Warfare* and hand future modern-day *Dutys* to…

…Sledgehammer
Glen "Dead Space" Schofield's new team is definitely at work on a *Call of Duty* game. Will we see it in 2011? Sledgehammer will likely take the series into the more distant future, although not the distant "space marine" future.

Multiplayer is Free
CEO of Activision Publishing Eric Hirshberg responded thusly to a question about future *Call of Duty* games: "Are we going to be charging for multiplayer? The answer is no." Sadly, downloadable content may appear on Xbox first.

Price Will Be Back
At the end of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*, Price and Nikolai were fugitives. After ensuring Soap got medical attention for his wounds, they fled together to Nikolai's safe place. We expect the next game to pick up where this conclusion left off.

PSP

PlayStation Portable

Stop Searching – The Largest, most Anticipated handheld adventure has arrived!

Top 10 PSP® Games of 2011

"Trails in the Sky has a reputation among importers for being a huge, well-told tale full of meaty combat and great characters."

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The Legend of Heroes

Trails in the Sky

Join the legendary Bracer's Guild and travel the world on an epic quest: Champion the justice of the kingdom.

Estelle

I'm ready to get this show on the road and become a bracer myself!

Enjoy over 50 hours of gameplay, plus many optional sidequests.

Plan your strategies carefully, making the most of each character, weapon and ability.

RATING PENDING

RP

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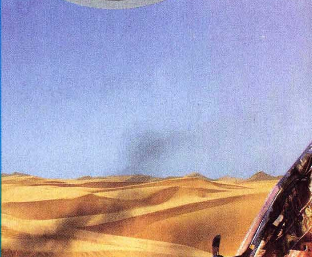
The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

4

Drake vs. The Desert

Fact or theory? The Uncharted 3 teaser gives us five of each. See what the trailer reveals...



The Facts

New levels and environments

Nathan Drake will visit the Rub' al Khali desert in Arabia, one of the world's largest. He'll also be forced to escape from a burning chateau somewhere in France. London may make an appearance, too.

Based on real mythology

As in previous games, there's real history behind the story, including the mythical lost city of Iram. Naturally, this will be embellished with fiction to keep it exciting.

Improved combat

There will be new melee combat, like hitting enemies with the butt of our rifles or landing on them from above to knock them out.

Drake and Sully, together again

We're still waiting on final word about Elena and Chloe's involvement, but we do know Drake will be working with his old pal Sully to find Iram.

Online cooperative play

Competitive and cooperative online play have been confirmed, but solid details for either one have not. Will there be a cooperative campaign this time?

Our Theories

London
As well as a partially obscured London phone number, we see a 10- and 20-pound note placed under a book. Drake may visit jolly old England—most probably London. Harry Flynn, his old friend from *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*, was from the United Kingdom. Maybe we'll get a flashback showing how the two became partners?

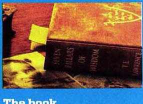
THOMAS
PHILBY
THESIGER

The pentagram
This symbol is similar to a special pentagram from the 17th century book *The Lesser Key of Solomon*. According to this ancient, authorless text—a favorite among demonologists—it is intended "to preserve thee from danger, and also command the spirits by." Which raises the question: Will Drake deal with the supernatural again?

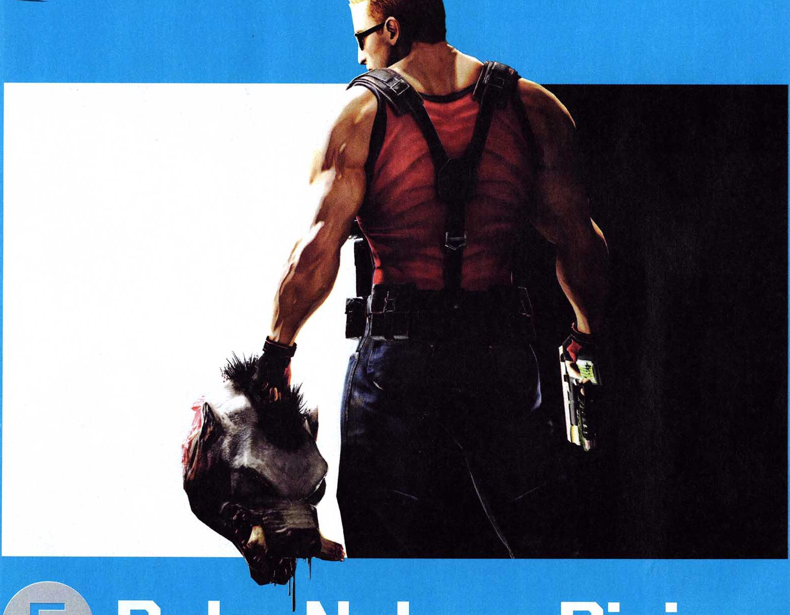
THOMAS
PHILBY
THESIGER

The explorers
The names of Bertram Thomas, St. John Philby, and Wilfred Thesiger are written down. Thomas was the first Westerner to cross the Rub' al Khali desert, Philby was an explorer, and Thesiger was an explorer and travel writer. Drake may use the work of these respected explorers to help him find the ancient lost city of Iram.

T.E. Lawrence
Better known by the name Lawrence of Arabia—and immortalized by Peter O'Toole in the classic film of the same name—Thomas Edward Lawrence was a British Army officer, writer, and archaeologist. His ideas and theories about the lost city of Iram form the basis of *Uncharted 3's* mysterious storyline.



The book
Lines from the book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* by T.E. Lawrence are read out loud by a somber sounding Drake in the trailer: "The dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dream with open eyes, to make it possible. This I did." As he reads the final line, the camera pulls back to reveal the site of a desert plane crash.



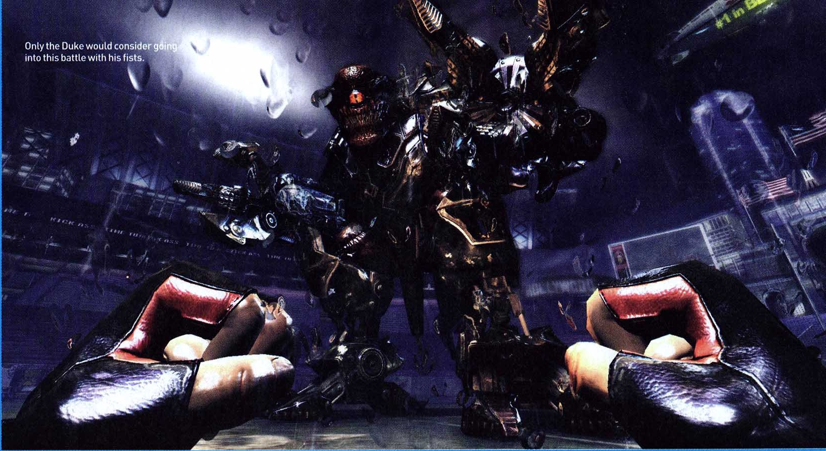
5 Duke Nukem Rising

The Duke won't be deterred by time or tide. And Randy Pitchford, the man who revived Duke Nukem, tells tales of the resurrection.

After 12 years in development hell, Duke Nukem Forever *has been rescued by Gearbox Software. Helmed by Randy Pitchford, who worked on* Duke Nukem 3D, *Gearbox seems incredibly passionate about bringing the project back to life, and with the company's expertise gleaned from games such as the superb* Borderlands, *it looks as if the decade-plus wait might well have been worth it.*

How do you live up to 12 years of anticipation?
I can't worry about that. I think if I did, I might fall into the same trap the 3D Realms guys did, where they wanted to keep redoing it and making things better. I'm not sure anything can live up to 12 years of anticipation. I'm committed to following through with their vision. If I commit to the expectation, we'll be doing it for another 12 years. I'm doing the responsible thing.

Are you worried the legacy will overshadow the actual game?
I don't know, we'll see. Obviously I made the decision I did to get involved, but I bet on Duke and I believe it'll work out. We'll see what happens. I can't worry about that too much, I just need to focus on the mission.



Only the Duke would consider going into this battle with his fists.

Who is Randy Pitchford?

Randy Pitchford originally worked with 3D Realms on *Duke Nukem 3D* in 1996. He then went on to form his own company, Gearbox, which started porting *Half-Life* to consoles and working on expansions for the PC version, before going on to design the excellent *Brothers In Arms* series. More recently, the company created the acclaimed shooter/RPG hybrid *Borderlands*.

Duke's been around since 1996. How are you making him relevant for 2011?

Duke is still probably the most iconic action hero in videogames. Whenever the mainstream press talk about games, they always show Lara Croft and Duke Nukem. But the thing is, I don't know why he's so iconic and why he stuck around for so long. I mean, he's totally one-dimensional. And he is just an amalgamation of all these extreme action heroes.

It's odd because a lot of our heroes today have become very human. They're emotional and complex and deep. Everyone's taking themselves so seriously. It's odd that today, even though back then he was this huge cliché, Duke feels fresh and stands out. I'll tell you this: there's a lot of love and attention for Duke, and it's not because of all the games that have come out. The fans have kept him alive, somehow.

Can you get away with more now than you could in the '90s?

I don't know. There's certainly more people watching. With *Duke 3D* there were no real rules. We were all self-regulated. Technically we are still self-regulated with the ESRB and PEGI, but we've set those establishments up to manage their own priorities. Their job is to inform us of what's in the game with such precision that our governments are happy to let them do what they do. They take their jobs very seriously, and as a consequence there's a line. If you cross it, you're considered "adult." If that happens, you won't be sold in stores.

Duke will dance all over that line and push it. And maybe the line will move. Entertainment is always pushing back the boundaries and if culture accepts that, the line moves. And if it rejects it, then the line goes back a bit. I think right now the lines are moving out and the boundaries are getting further away. We're in the information age. Nobody can really be offended any more, because we have computers that are connected to the Internet and are a magic window to infinite porn and violence. Society has never been injured by information. I think the best way to advance and make the world better is to be free.

Have you brought anything from other Gearbox games to Duke Nukem Forever?

The best thing that we're bringing to *Duke* is our experience in making console games. That's what we're bringing to *Duke*. Each time we make a game we commit to what that game's identity is. If you think about *Borderlands* and *Brothers In Arms*, these are very different games. Duke is also his own thing, so this isn't like the *Borderlands* version of *Duke*. This is *Duke* like it's supposed to be. We're also committed to helping the guys from 3D Realms have their vision realized. It's their vision, and that's what we're following.

What defines Duke Nukem?

I think it's this combination of action gameplay and cognitive gameplay, where you're exploring or solving puzzles, or there's an obstacle in your way that you have to find out how to overcome. It's a balance between these two things. Most shooters just focus on the action, not this pacing. *Half-Life* does it well; this kind of iterative gameplay that evolved from where *Duke* started. *Forever* goes a lot further with that.

Another thing is interactivity. You're able to use and manipulate your environment, and not because you have to, but because you're curious. And when something happens, you're like "Oh, that makes sense. I didn't expect that!" Which is surprising, fun, and rewarding. Another thing is secrets: testing the environment or using the tools of the game to see if you can almost break it and find something cool. I like this kind of relationship between gamer and designer. All those things come together to make *Duke* very unique. It's very rare, and something you don't get in other shooters.

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

6 Decisions, Decisions...

Jean-Francois Dugas, project lead on Deus Ex: Human Revolution, waxes philosophic on choice and gunplay

How similar will *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* be to the original PC games? Will gamers need to play the previous games?
This is a new game basically. We treat it like a new idea. Even though it has all the elements of the old games, we bring that kind of experience to a new generation of gamers that never experienced the old games in the first place. It's a really, really good premise and it has a lot of potential and possibilities, and I think we have what recent games like *BioShock* and *Fallout 3* had that's opened the eyes of gamers. Those games have something bigger and deeper, and we're following in that spirit.

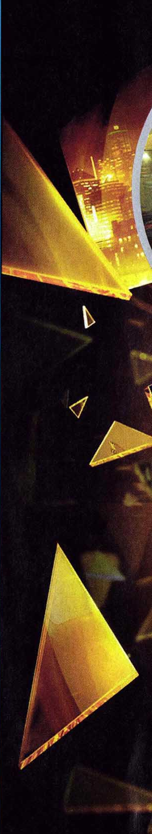
So *Revolution* is, in your mind, a more philosophical game that isn't afraid to tackle heavier subjects?
That's what I think. We're not trying to be like, "Oh my God, it's a game that will make you think all the time!" It's not in that sense—it's more that it touches on those subjects but, if you're not interested in that, you still have a great game to play.

The trailers so far have touched on everything from *Blade Runner* to Greek mythology. Can you comment on some of the material that's influenced the game?
Obviously Greek mythology was a huge inspiration, but we also looked at a lot of cyberpunk movies or science books about transhumanism where technology and human improvement are happening. We also went with Japanese anime like *Ghost in the Shell*. We went all over the place. We also work with a consultant who works in the biotech industry. We work with him to make sure that even though some of our augmentations are totally out there, the scientific principles behind them are credible and make sense as much as possible.

Can you explain the "choice and consequences" mantra that seems to drive the game?
On the main story level your main character is in some situation in which you'll be asked questions like, "Is it right? Is it wrong? Should I do it? Should I not do it?" It's going to make players consider, "Am I comfortable as a human being making that choice?" I hope that players don't see it as, "Oh if I choose that, then I won't get a reward, and if I choose that then, yes, I will get a reward." We're trying to eliminate that kind of an equation. We want the players to just make a choice about what they feel as opposed to "Oh, I'm going to have the big gun."

Will those sorts of decisions impact the rest of the game along the way, or will they simply dictate which ending a player sees?
Some choices will impact you. I mean, not everything is going to impact you because the story is not wrenching left and right because otherwise it would take 15 years to make that game. But yes, the encounters you make and how you deal with them will have impact—not necessarily right after you make the choice, later on but before the end. Because if you do a lot of things before the end of the game then you might have forgotten a lot of the things you've done. So you need to make sure that players see how the game reacts as they play as opposed to waiting for the end. So it's kind of a mix of all those things.

We're fascinated by the fact that players can actually complete the game without killing anyone. Why is it so important to give players that degree of freedom?
I want the players to become this character, Adam Jensen, and experience how he goes into this conspiracy. I don't like when you play this role and you have to get into this character but at the same time you are forced to destroy everything or try to save the world. It's about your personal values in life, what's important to you. If you jump into that fantasy and decide that Adam Jensen is going to be as peaceful as possible, then it's going to be possible.

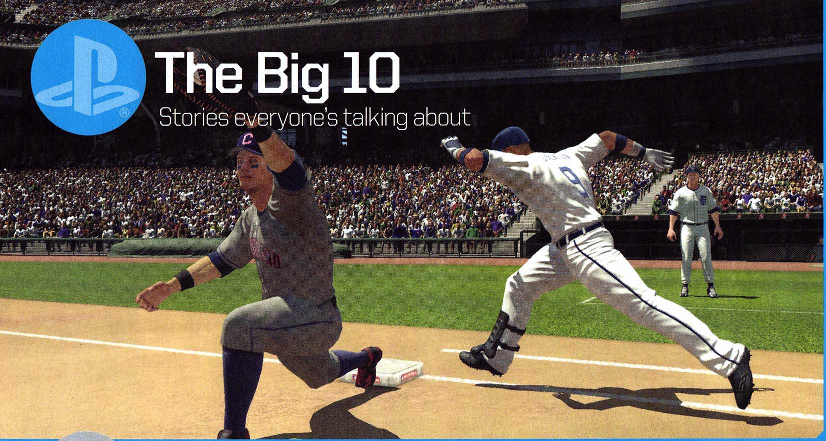


A Serious Man
Grappling with subjects like socio-economic prejudice and the morality of technology, *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* may rival brainy games like *BioShock* in terms of intellectual ambition. But that doesn't mean we won't get to blow stuff up. Dystopian futures have explosions too!

POLICE
LICE

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



7 Field of Dreams

Wade McGilberry made a million dollars playing MLB 2K10. Who's next?

Take the Mound

MLB 2K11's Perfect Game Challenge should be more competitive based on these changes to the contest format:

SPRING TRAINING
The game releases on March 8 this year, but the Challenge doesn't officially begin until 12:00:01 PM EST on April 1 (Major League Baseball's Opening Day). That's over three weeks of potential practice time for entrants.

LEAGUE EXPANSION
The age requirement has been lowered. The Challenge is now open to legal U.S. residents 13 and older—excluding residents of AZ, CT, MD, ND, and VT, where the contest is prohibited.

The earliest time-stamped and verified submission will win the million dollar prize. The verification requirements are strict, so scrutinize the official rules at **2ksports.com/perfectgame.**

Who says playing videogames is a waste of time? For 24-year-old Alabaman Wade McGilberry, pitching a perfect game in MLB 2K10 *earned him a him a cool million dollars. We chatted with McGilberry about how he achieved the feat and his advice for this year's contestants.*

How long have you been playing *MLB 2K*?
I'd played other 2K Sports games, but *2K10* was the first time I'd played the baseball game.

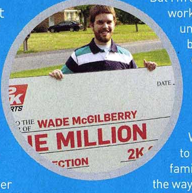
You pitch your perfect game on the first day of the contest. Was it skill or luck?
A little bit of both.

Did you have a particular strategy?
Well, I pretty much threw whatever pitch I wanted, but I also followed the catcher's pitch and location suggestions. And the game notes a batter's hot and cold zones so I tried to keep it in the cold zones. I tried to keep my pitches off the plate, but I tried to avoid throwing pitches at full strength so when a batter actually got a hit there wasn't much power behind it. I only threw about two or three strikeouts in the entire game.

Did you feel the pressure mount?
I definitely felt the pressure. But I just tried to not think ahead and take it one batter at a time.

Walk us through the final inning. What'd you do when you completed the game?
I think I let out a shout, but I'm a pretty low-key guy so I didn't react too much beyond that. It was more a sense of disbelief that I'd done it and making sure I wrote down the confirmation code to enter online for the time stamp.

After sending in your video, how long did it take 2K Sports to notify you that you'd won?
It was about two months. But I really wasn't sure that I'd won. I mean, I was surprised that I did it on the first day. But I'm a pretty responsible guy so I went into work that day and didn't start playing the game until I got home. So I knew I had a chance, but I figured there was some college kid out there who'd skipped class to play.



How has the million dollars changed your life?
It really hasn't changed too much actually. We went out and got a puppy and decided to start a family. We recently bought a family-type vehicle since we have a baby on the way. But we don't worry about stuff as much.

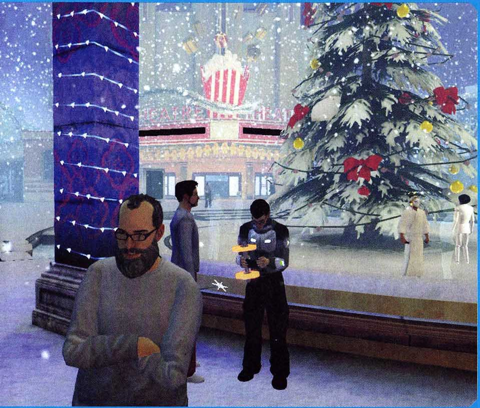
Are you going to try for a repeat with *MLB 2K11*? Or have you been declared ineligible?
I am ineligible, but I will probably buy the new game and see if, and how fast, I can do it again.

Any advice for your fellow gamers looking to win this year's Challenge?
Practice as much as possible to get a feel for the game.

8

Home Invasion

We stalk an unwitting subject to discover what people do in Home



When we connect to Home, we see people milling around and wonder what they're up to. We decided to investigate—by which we mean stalk someone.

We went to Home Square, closed our eyes and pointed at the screen. Our finger fell upon a random avatar whose name and identity we've chosen to protect. Our subject—let's call him Cliff—is standing by the water, motionless, alone.

Suddenly, he runs off. We give chase, trying to keep our distance and not look conspicuous—difficult when our avatar is sporting a giant beard. He runs toward two men who are sitting cross-legged talking about growing, *ahem*, herbal remedies in their bedrooms. Surely Cliff will chime in, if only to express moral outrage...or ask for tips? Nothing.

His avatar pulls out its PDA—a sign that he's in the menu. After a minute of fiddling, he returns, and goes to stand beside other avatars, possibly sizing up their outfits.

And that's about it. Cliff, as it turns out, is an awfully dull stalkee. Is he a real person? An A.I. bot designed to make Home look busier than it actually is? That would be one possible explanation for why there are so many people in Home who never say anything. Are the real users buying expensive hats and sofas to impress uncaring automatons? It's worth thinking about. But not for any great length of time.

9

The Readers' Most Wanted

What came first? This magazine, or the insatiable desire for over-the-top violence? We put *Mortal Kombat* on the cover of our January issue, and the brutal, bloody brawler leapt to the top spot of desired titles. Coincidence? We think not. Not that we're patting ourselves on the back, as that would be unseemly. Instead, we'll just silently gloat, quietly confident in our innate ability to always make the right decision. It's why you love us, after all, isn't it?

01 *Mortal Kombat*
02 *LittleBigPlanet 2*
03 *Killzone 3*
04 *Twisted Metal*
05 *Batman: Arkham City*
06 *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*
07 *SOCOM 4: U.S. Navy SEALs*
08 *MLB 11: The Show*
09 *Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds*
10 *DC Universe Online*
11 *Max Payne 3*
12 *inFamous 2*
13 *Final Fantasy XIV*
14 *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One*
15 *Dead Space 2*
16 *The Last Guardian*
17 *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier*
18 *NBA Elite 11*
19 *Dragon Age II*
20 *F.E.A.R. 3*

RATCHET & CLANK: A40

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

Stats in this chart appear courtesy of OTX Research. All games are PS3 titles scheduled to release after Dec. 1, 2010. Polling period was Nov. 14, 2010, to Nov. 27, 2010.

10 Is Marvel better than DC?

The comic gauntlet has been thrown; watch our editors duke it out

Yes
Says "Gifted Youngsters" graduate
Scott Butterworth

Superman might be the most boring character ever created. No, really—he's entirely too perfect: the strongest, fastest, most powerful being on Earth with the moral compass of a Boy Scout and the chiseled good looks of a PTOM editor. He can do no wrong and can never truly be defeated. Where's the tension? Where's the drama?

Spider-Man, on the other hand, is total mess. He hates his boss, can't sustain a relationship with his girlfriend, constantly struggles with family issues, and gets forced into morally ambiguous situations on a regular basis. And unlike that laughably overpowered meathead in a cape, he can actually have the crap kicked out of him. Now *that's* relatable.

To be fair, Superman isn't all DC has to offer, but its other banner characters are equally infallible (and therefore equally boring). Batman's got one hell of an interesting backstory, but he's regularly portrayed as the single sharpest detective to ever live, as well as the single most skilled hand-to-hand combatant. As for Wonder Woman and the Flash...well, you get the idea.

Now compare that to some of Marvel's superstars: the Hulk can't even control his powers, much less feel empowered by them. Magneto, though clearly a criminal, is arguably a misguided civil rights extremist, not a two-dimensional Bond villain. These characters have a remarkably human quality that makes them worth caring about.

Sure *Arkham Asylum* was a fantastic game, but what else you got, DC fans?

No
Says the peak-conditioned editor
Gary Steinman

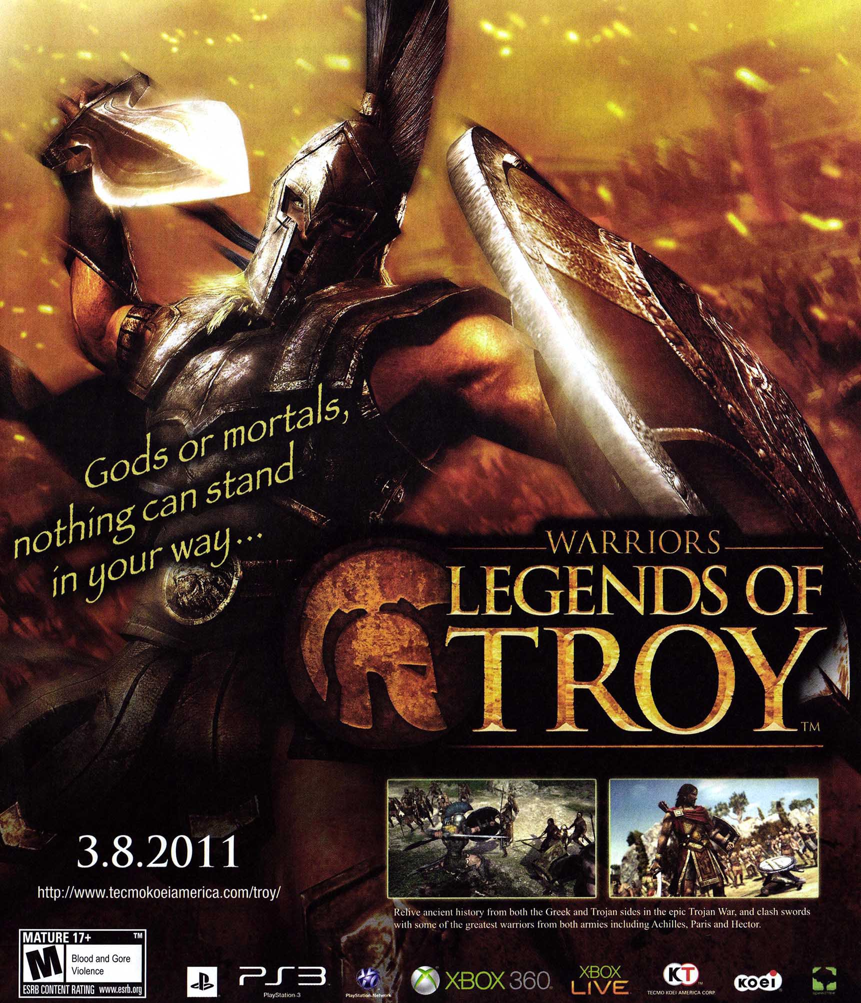
One word: Batman. Not only is he the greatest comic hero ever invented, but he now stars in the greatest comic-book game ever developed. I can stop here, spill my lentil soup on my keyboard, take a picture of the resulting mess, then paste it onto the page—and still win this debate. But that wouldn't be sporting of me, so to this argument I'll add:

Green Lantern. Green Arrow. Wonder Woman. Flash. Martian Manhunter. Doctor Mid-Nite. Wildcat. Black Canary. And yes, Superman.

What do all these heroes have in common? They're adults. Who act like adults. And have adult problems. Unlike the man-babies of the Marvel universe who whine and mope and throw temper tantrums that destroy worlds, DC's heroes show a little restraint. They have nuance instead of angst. They have depth where the Marvel heroes are daft.

It's precisely this depth that makes the DC characters so great for videogames. As evidenced by *Arkham Asylum*, the DC heroes (and villains too) are astoundingly well developed, with rich backstories that permeate their personalities and powers. That's why the interplay between Bats and every one of his enemies is so amazing. Even the silliest of foes has reasons for his actions, meaning behind his powers.

I grant you that Superman remains a fail in the videogame world, but it's not because of his character. Despite being grossly overpowered, Supes possesses more nuance than Marvel's lame attempt at parity: the psychotic Sentry. I'll take the Boy Scout over *that* nutjob any day.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Previews

Quick Pitch

Apocalypse Now

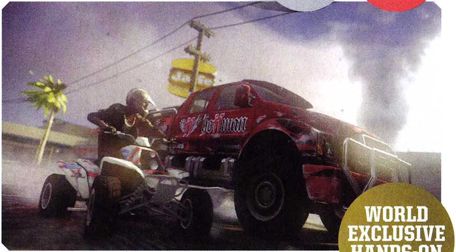
Race off-road-style as a modern metropolis crumbles all around.

Behind the Wheel

Characters and plot add depth to the *MotorStorm* universe.

Steer Fate

Visually customize cars, then trick them out with game-changing perks.



WORLD EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON
PlayStation. The Official Magazine

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **April** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Evolution Studios**

MotorStorm Apocalypse

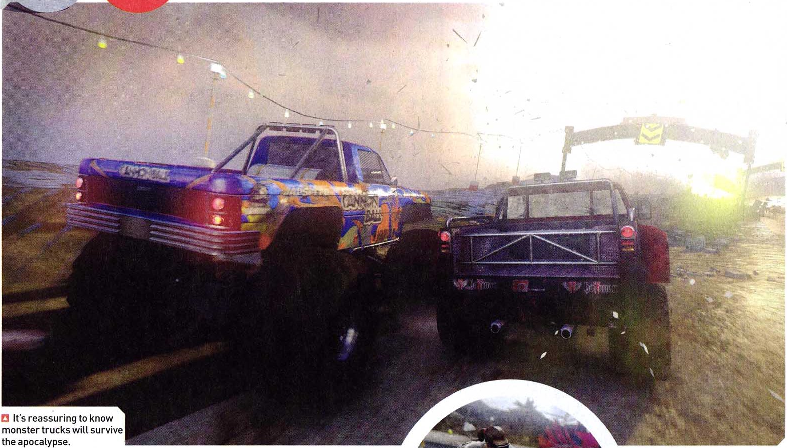
The evolution of the destruction derby has arrived

It's the end of the world as we know it. Most civilians are running for cover or making good with their respective deities. Despite impeding doom, the anarchic racers of *MotorStorm: Apocalypse* gun their engines for one more race while the world falls apart around them. Just don't call Evolution Studios' gorgeous new 3D racer post-apocalyptic. "The beginning of the game is pre-apocalyptic," game director Matt Southern says. "The rest is apocalyptic!" So unlike *Fallout* or *Mad Max* where survivors kick around in the rubble of civilization, *Apocalypse* lets gamers put the pedal to the metal as the destruction *happens*. Southern calls the newly minted racing genre "urban off-road racing."

"This is a never-before-played experience," he boasts. "We've taken two discrete styles of racer—street racing and off-road racing—and shoved them through an earthquake-powered blender."

The game spans 48 virtual racing hours as The City—a fictional metropolis inspired by the left coast—is shaken to rubble. During the single-player festival, gamers will have the option of playing at three different difficulties, and each play will follow the path of a different racer: Mash, Tyler, and Big Dog, respectively. The lively, hand-drawn characters look like they fit somewhere between *Initial D* and *Duke Nukem*. Apart from the three protagonists, there's a slew of supporting racers—colorful characters such as Ratfoot, Chronic, and Mr. Magic—who will help add a human (albeit crazy) face to the proceedings.

That's not to say *Apocalypse* is going the story-driven route of a Kojima joint. "The story isn't heavy," says producer Damien Pinnock. "It's not like an RPG." Rather, snippets of plot and character are doled out in bites while the races load. The sequences are in a comic-book style with loosely animated cutouts of the characters. ▸▸



It's reassuring to know monster trucks will survive the apocalypse.

Boardwalk Breakdown

Races will go down in approximately 10 different areas. Our exclusive playtest took place on the Waves of Mutilation track in the game's Boardwalk area. Racers blast through ruined docks as the sea laps at their tires. From the buildings, human survivors take potshots at the racers with machine guns. Meanwhile, a massive tornado swirls angrily in the gray sky above.

That storm isn't just scenery. As the race progresses the funnel cloud throws entire boats at the racetrack. Racers who don't react in time will slam right into the hurled vessels.

Grand instances like these break up all of *Apocalypse's* races. Buildings crumble and collapse, gas stations explode, and smokestacks topple. What was once a clear open road becomes a dead end. And sometimes the right kind of destruction can reveal new routes. In the case of The Mile High Club—a race through and over the tops of wrecked skyscrapers—drivers will discover new passages while they're embroiled in the heat of competition.

But players won't see the more dramatic cataclysms occur during the game's 16-vehicle online races. "Logistically it would make things difficult," Pinnock says. "Especially if

No helmet, inadequate protective gear... Wanna bet he's uninsured to boot?

What's In, What's Out

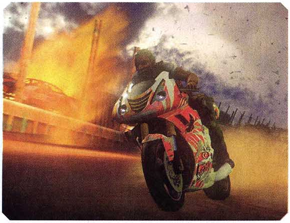
In! Stereoscopic 3D

We've never witnessed a 3D racing game like this one. That's because *MotorStorm: Apocalypse* throws the kitchen sink at us. The tactic might seem gimmicky if employed in 3D movies, but when buildings, boats, pedestrians, and balls of flame come flying toward our windshield during a game, it's more than welcome.

Out! Night Racing

Fans have been begging for nocturnal races, but they didn't make the cut. "They didn't have the tech to do it before," admits producer Damien Pinnock. The graphics engine is now robust enough to handle dim lighting, but it didn't fit with *Apocalypse*, which relies on spotting big destruction from a distance. "It wasn't fun," Pinnock says.

ProTip: Use the velocitator for speed and the deceleratrix to stop.



Motorcycle riding is not the preferred means to outrace impending doom. But one must make do with the tools at hand.

EXCLUSIVE SHOTS PlayStation The Official Magazine

Only the world's tragic demise can take the fun out of an amusement park.

people are on different laps." The game can't have whole parts of its racetracks falling into the sea if a couple of stragglers still haven't made it past the cut-off point. *Apocalypse* even goes so far as to inform players of which solo races feature said incidents and which don't. That's because much of the game's story mode is packed with challenges and perks that let drivers customize the way their vehicles play. A pesky incident could get in the way of achieving some of those goals.

Perks come in three different categories: handling, boost, and combat. Once earned, players can pick and choose, slotting them into customized loadouts that suit their play style. Aggressive drivers, for example, will be keen to equip the Swift Return perk, which speeds their return to the track after a wreck.

Players ride the yo-yo of speed boosts and the risk of overheating

Stay Cool

The constant courting of disaster remains the primary tension in *Apocalypse*. Players ride the yo-yo between the reward of speed boosts and the risk of overheating. Traditionally engines could be cooled by splashes of water, but now air can do the same work. In Waves of Mutilation, sheets of rain cause a constant cooling effect allowing racers to ride their boosts harder, but players will need to be more resourceful on bone-dry tracks—busted water mains and hydrants will do the job. Other tracks will require racers to perform *Dukes of Hazzard*-like air-catching jumps to keep the motor running. "When you do a big jump and you come off the gas, your engine cools," Pinnock says.

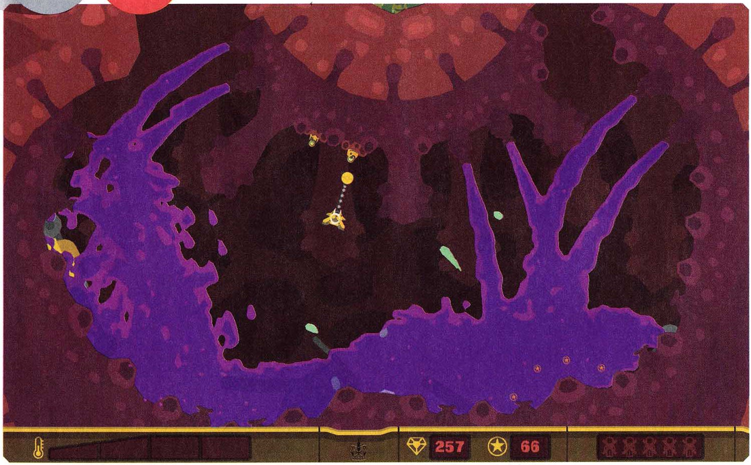
Another way to run an engine ragged is by ramming other racers. Two buttons now allow the driver to ram to the left or right, slamming into hapless opponents. Smart drivers can use the same aggro move to juke around obstacles. But these moves burn boost, so an overly physical driver will sacrifice speed (and risk an explosion) every time he barges his way through the pack.

Other additions to the game include a number of new vehicles including tricked-out choppers, tiny Mini Cooper clones, and high-horsepower supercars. On top of performance perks, Pinnock promises that players will be able to customize the look of their vehicles as never before. And, of course, since the end is near, as they will never get to again. GUS MASTRAPA

Dev Chat

"Our philosophy with A.I. is that it should behave as much like a real player as possible, but in a way which always aims to provide entertainment. Human players don't just try to win the race. They also taunt, attack, and interact with one another."

Matt Southern
game director, Evolution Studios



UPDATE Format **PSN** ETA **Q1** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Q-Games**

PixelJunk Shooter 2

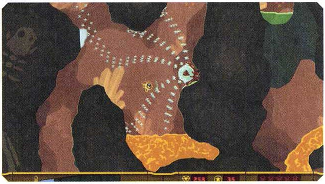
Don't be alone in the dark

It may have missed its intended fall launch target, but with fresh details about the all-new online multiplayer mode, we're convinced *PixelJunk Shooter 2* will be well worth the wait.

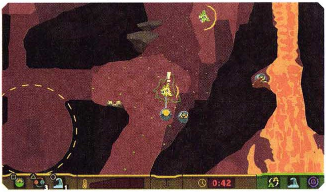
Rather than offer traditional online modes that would stray from the established tone and mechanics of the first game, *Shooter 2* pits two players against each other, with one trying to rescue survivors and the other making that heroic act as difficult as possible. Once the initial rescuer fails, players swap roles and give it another go. "We initially attempted a straight free-for-all versus mode but it lacked *something*," *PixelJunk* mastermind Dylan Cuthbert says, noting experimentation yielded the final player vs. player mode.

Augmenting the objective-based battles is an online league system, which unlocks further stages and precious coin used to place bets and purchase the 20 online power-ups and weapons in the game. Among those is the Tsunami, which flushes the screen with water and offers "a last minute chance to even the scores," Cuthbert explains, alongside what he describes as a "peculiarly intelligent homing missile."

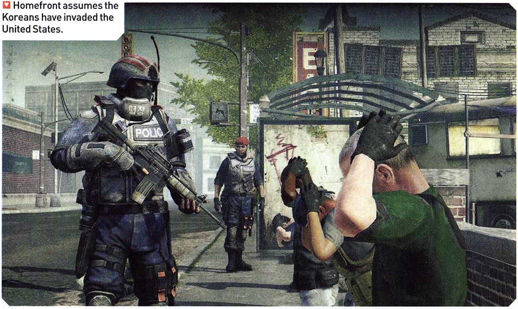
The online mode arrives in addition to the sizeable solo campaign, which begins quite literally within the belly of a beast; includes new light and dark puzzle mechanics; and promises epic new boss battles—all of which we expect to be gleefully enjoying any day now. **ANDREW HAYWARD**



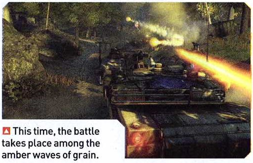
▲ So this is how Jonah felt after being swallowed by a great fish in the Old Testament. Welcome to somethingorother's digestive tract.



▲ Once a player purchases a weapon or power-up, it's his to keep forever, and up to three in total can be equipped before each online battle.



Homefront assumes the Koreans have invaded the United States.



This time, the battle takes place among the amber waves of grain.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **March** Pub **THQ** Dev **Kaos Studios**

Homefront

Courting controversy...but with style

Dev Talk

"Our theme in the single-player is: the familiar has become alien. You know what America looks like and then you see it in this new light: occupied, a little more worn down. You'll experience that universe in multiplayer as well. It will be saturated with Americana."

Jeremy Greiner
Community Manager, KAOS Studios

We peer out the window of the bus and see a child, crouched over the bodies of his parents. He's sobbing uncontrollably, really wailing, and for a few seconds that's all we can hear. There are ambient noises—the rumble of the bus engine, screams, gunshots—but they fade into the background. Seconds earlier we saw the boy dragged away from the adult couple who were shoved up against the nearest wall and executed by a pair of Korean soldiers; part of an army who have come to occupy North America. Welcome to *Homefront*.

The game's chilling plot is being written by John Milius, the man who penned the America-under-siege film *Red Dawn*. The game is set in the future, wherein a reinvigorated North Korea takes over the bulk of Asia and then invades the U.S. But while the setting places *Homefront* apart from other first-person shooters—essential in a world dominated by *Call of Duty*—the action manages to stand out as well.

In action, *Homefront* is more of a *Battlefield* or *Killzone* than *Call of Duty*. Shooting feels realistic, with guns having real weight and impact. Impressively, each firearm has a different feel to it and we were forced to continually swap as ammo ran out at an alarming rate. It's a subtle device, but it made us feel like the oppressed rebel doing whatever we could to survive. The action lacks polish but we hope that'll be applied before the invasion begins. **ANDY HARTUP**

Could Be A Contender

No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise

Paradise found?

The Premise
Make nerdy Travis Touchdown into the top hitman around by slaying the 10 best assassins in Santa Destroy, CA, a fictional openworld city filled with bizarre characters and side-quests.

The Reality
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise offers hack-'n'-slash action using an energy sword players control with the PlayStation Move.

The Hook
Paradise updates the 2008 Wii cult classic with an HD makeover and bonus content. Plus, it's incredibly gory.

The Inspiration
Dirty Harry, *Spaceballs*, and *Jackass* inspired this eccentric adventure.

The Chances
Paradise, given its tweaks, could be even more strange and entrancing on PS3.

Format **PS3** ETA **Fall** Pub **Konami**
Dev **Grasshopper Manufacture/Feelplus**

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2011** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Insomniac**

Resistance 3

Alien-blaster shows its sensitive side

"We're moving away from the military side of things," says *Resistance 3's* creative director Marcus Smith. "Humanity has had to change tactics. This is a game about survival." To demonstrate, we're shown new protagonist Joseph Capelli wandering around a school house that's serving as an exiled township's sanctuary. He's free to roam and explore as the stories of the inhabitants unfold.

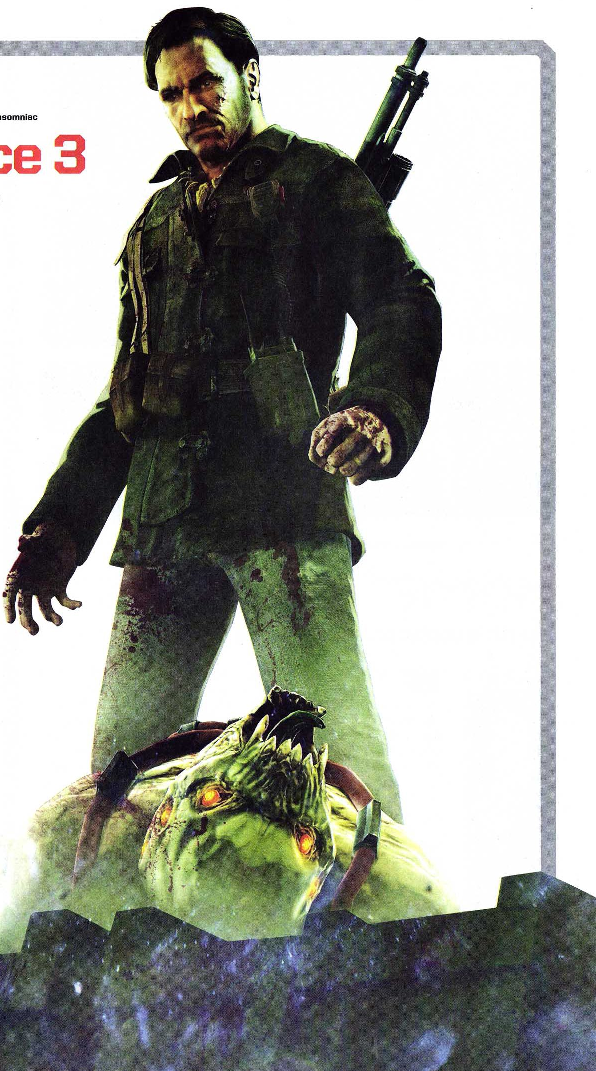
The area is rich in detail. We see a Chimeran flute, a child crying over a corpse, and a cook reaching down for ominous-looking "reaper bits" to add to his stew. It reveals a broader direction for Insomniac: they're designing a real world, not an apocalypse-skinned shooting gallery.

The combat demo we play is set on a boat, and sees Capelli leaving Haven to rescue the population of a small village devastated by floods. We pass a dead Kraken that's rotting and teeming with parasites, a nod to *Resistance 2's* first boss. Although unfinished, the third installment is starting to look beautiful, already showing a greater vibrancy and range of color than its predecessors.

Later, the level blows wide open, segueing into familiar large-scale territory. Drop ships land, releasing Chimeran Grims and a new mechanical goliath called Long Legs. It's an all-out assault on the trigger finger and senses.

In contrast, our next demo starts with a stealth-type mission, and it's tense. Capelli and his team travel underground while keeping tabs on a death squad patrolling up above. The mission ends in an inevitable firefight, but the first half is a welcome change of pace; a perfect example of how Insomniac is trying to mix up the formula for *Resistance 3*.

JAMES COATES



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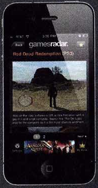

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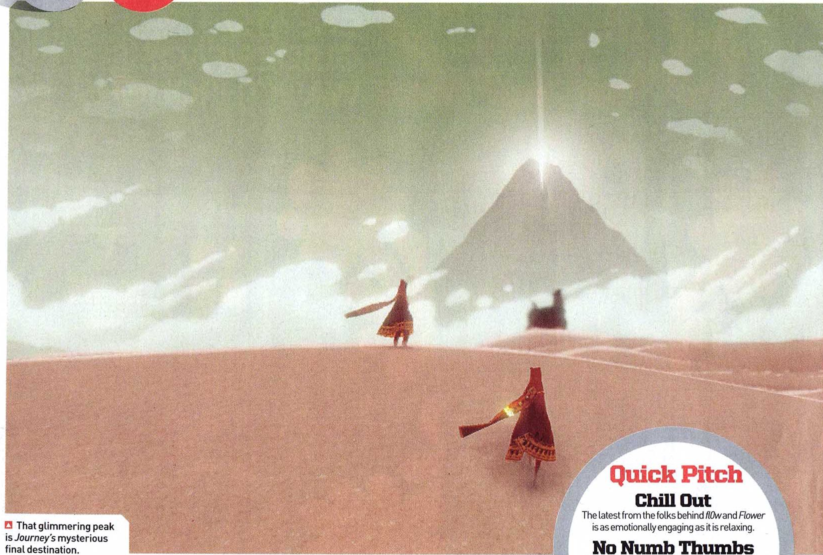


▲ That glimmering peak is *Journey's* mysterious final destination.

Quick Pitch

Chill Out
The latest from the folks behind *fl0w* and *Flower* is as emotionally engaging as it is relaxing.

No Numb Thumbs
The DualShock's motion tech moves the camera and two face buttons handle jumping and shouting.

True Grit
The physics trickery and appealing art ensure *Journey's* sand will play an important role.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2011** Pub **SCEA** Dev **thatgamecompany**

Journey

It's all about the sand, man

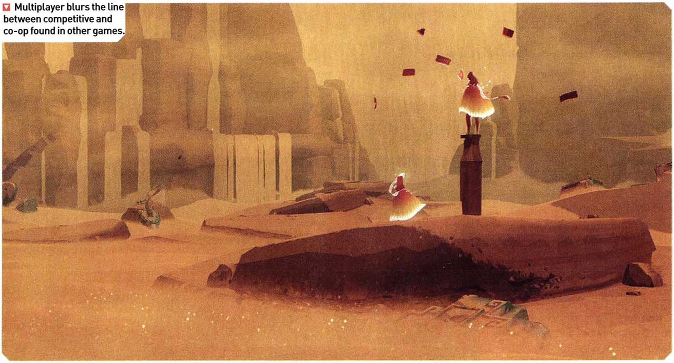
Where most developers want to spike adrenaline and tax trigger fingers, thatgamecompany hopes to elicit emotional responses and soothe the senses. It's accomplished this with previous critical darlings *fl0w* and *Flower*, and the developers plan to engage minds while relaxing muscles again with *Journey*. Set in expansive, sun-baked desert environments, *Journey* features an enigmatic protagonist made of fabric, and a far-off mountain peak. The seemingly simple goal is to reach the taunting and towering apex in the distance.

How this is accomplished is a closely guarded secret; keeping with its ambitious design philosophy, thatgamecompany wants players' sense of discovery sparked. We do know the title's beautiful sand plays a prominent role. Whether surfing atop waves of it or trudging its dunes, interaction with the grainy stuff is integral to progression. Cloth is also important. In addition to characters being bizarre cloth-people, fabric flows from structures and can be manipulated. During our demo, we witnessed ragged swaths colorfully rejuvenated as the avatar approached them.

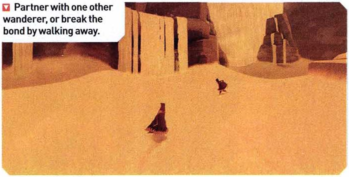
Journey's mysteries can be mined in a non-conventional multiplayer mode the developer claims is neither competitive nor cooperative. Forgoing lobbies, chat support, and PSN IDs in favor of a "shout" button and do-what-you-want approach, the game's online interactions offer an alternative to the normally frag-focused pastime. We look forward to unlocking all of *Journey's* tranquility-inducing secrets when it sifts through our fingers later this year. **MATT CABRAL**

Dev Talk

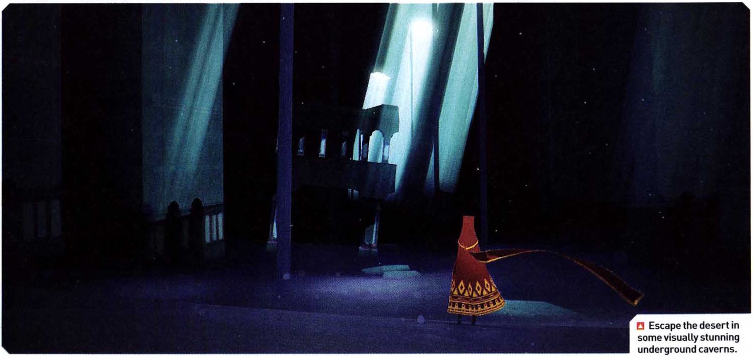
"Our goal is to create games that express different emotions within the market, push the boundaries of games as a communicative medium, and question the assumptions about videogames and what they're supposed to be."
Kellee Santiago
president and co-founder, thatgamecompany



Multiplayer blurs the line between competitive and co-op found in other games.



Partner with one other wanderer, or break the bond by walking away.



Escape the desert in some visually stunning underground caverns.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **March** Pub **LucasArts** Dev **TT Games**

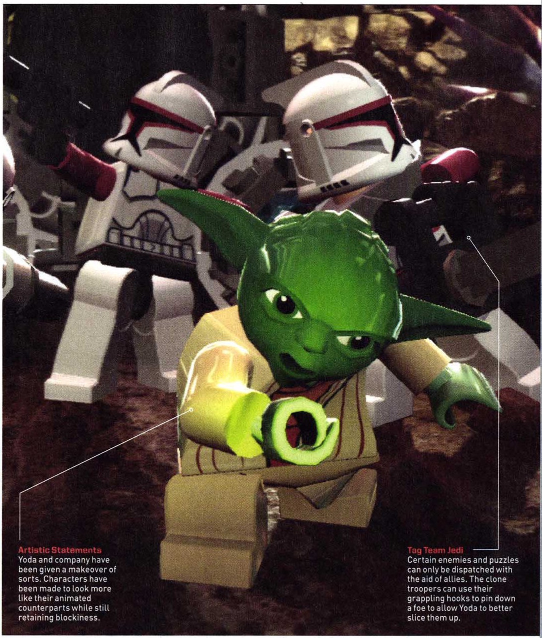
LEGO Star Wars III The Clone Wars

Much more than just a carbon copy

This much is true: A clone is never alone and, simultaneously, he's his own best friend. And it's good to be among friends when the clones are fighting the droids.

LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars offers more blockheads in a comical recreation of George Lucas' *Star Wars,* specifically its *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* animated TV show. By now, the offbeat, third-person-perspective platforming, combat, and puzzle solving of the LEGO game franchise are well-worn tropes. The gameplay demands switching among the various characters (each with its own special abilities) in order to beat the game's on-foot and spaceship-based segments. And this, then, is absolutely fine, because LucasArts goes that extra lightyear to add new elements to the package.

For this galactic jaunt, there's a new battle system wherein it's possible to take a Jedi warrior (say the plucky Ashoka Tano) onto one of 20 battle-fields and have her drop-down a series of structures to be used for—what else—crushing the other guy in the manner of a grape before the press. There are also barracks that can mass produce clone or droid troopers. Properly placed, cannons can wreck enemy barricades, and so on. The stage, then, has been set for tremendous battles pitting clones against troopers, with LucasArts allowing for single-player wars, as well as player-vs.-player and two-player cooperative fights. **GREG ORLANDO**



Artistic Statements
Yoda and company have been given a makeover of sorts. Characters have been made to look more like their animated counterparts while still retaining blockiness.

Tag Team Jedi
Certain enemies and puzzles can only be dispatched with the aid of allies. The clone troopers can use their grappling hooks to pin down a foe to allow Yoda to better slice them up.

Massive Effect LEGO Star Wars gets some new Force works

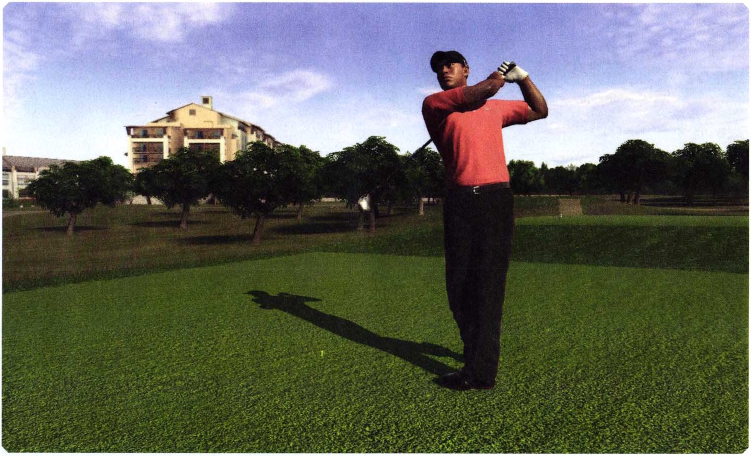
Super Troopers
Create an army of clones.

This Means War!
This is war on a grand scale.

New Heroes
Meet plucky Jedi Ashoka Tano.

The Most Unkind Cut
Cut steel with a lightsaber.

Clone Warfare
The story's based on a cartoon.



HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **March** Pub **EA Sports** Dev **EA Tiburon**

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12 The Masters

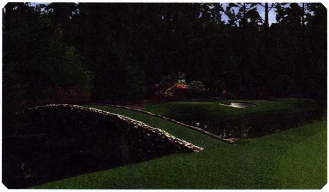
Moving back up the leaderboard

It's a year of new beginnings for Tiger Woods, so it makes sense the game bearing his name features a bevy of new features and upgrades.

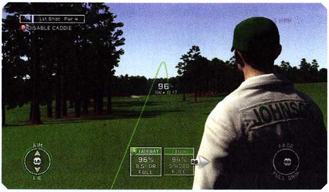
The big news for *PGA Tour 12* is the addition of The Masters tournament. Augusta National is recreated to minute detail, but its presence in the game goes far beyond padding out the course list. The broadcast-style presentation perfectly captures the pageantry of golf's must exclusive tournament, and a special mode allows players to relive The Masters' nine greatest moments. Virtual duffers can also attempt to best Tiger's score from each of his five green jacket victories.

On the links, the addition of a caddy makes for improved accessibility much in the manner of *Madden's* time-saving GameFlow system. During our brief hands-on, the caddy offered an aggressive and conservative approach for every shot, handling club selection and leaving execution as our sole responsibility. A convenient zoom feature offered a peek at the ball's potential landing zone, but we could custom craft our own shot if neither of the caddy's suggestions were to our liking. Coupled with the welcome new ability to save matches mid-round, the system promises a gamer-friendly experience that isn't just for noobs.

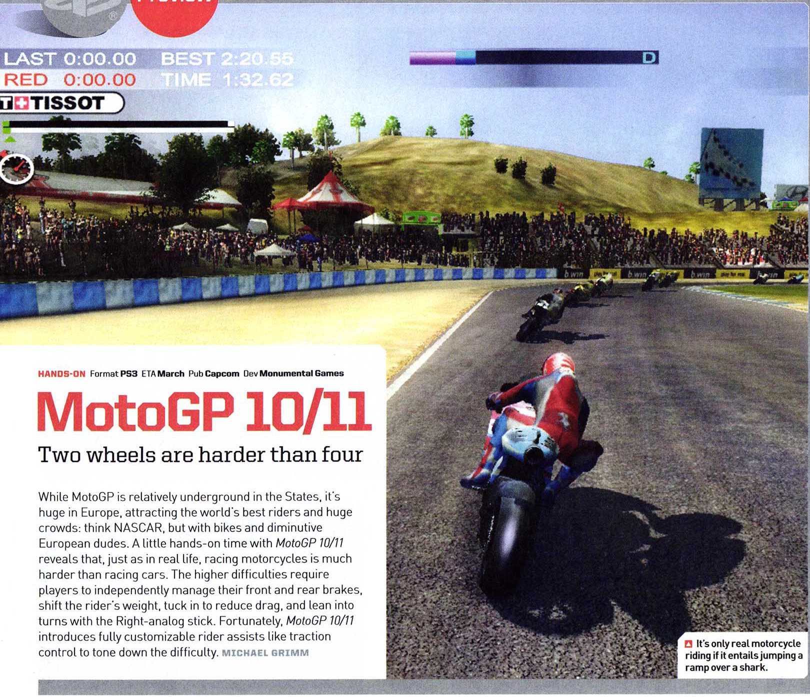
ROGER BURCHILL



Iconic Augusta National Golf Club makes its first appearance in a videogame, and The Masters assumes the limelight in *PGA Tour 12*.



The addition of a caddy aids with club and shot selection while streamlining the gameplay experience.



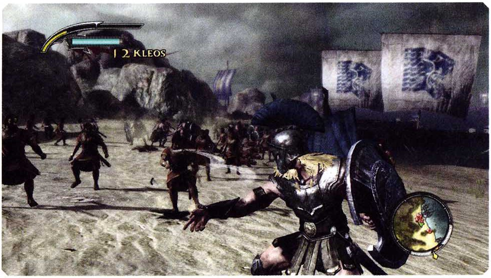
HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **March** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Monumental Games**

MotoGP 10/11

Two wheels are harder than four

While MotoGP is relatively underground in the States, it's huge in Europe, attracting the world's best riders and huge crowds: think NASCAR, but with bikes and diminutive European dudes. A little hands-on time with *MotoGP 10/11* reveals that, just as in real life, racing motorcycles is much harder than racing cars. The higher difficulties require players to independently manage their front and rear brakes, shift the rider's weight, tuck in to reduce drag, and lean into turns with the Right-analog stick. Fortunately, *MotoGP 10/11* introduces fully customizable rider assists like traction control to tone down the difficulty. **MICHAEL GRIMM**

▲ **It's only real motorcycle riding if it entails jumping a ramp over a shark.**

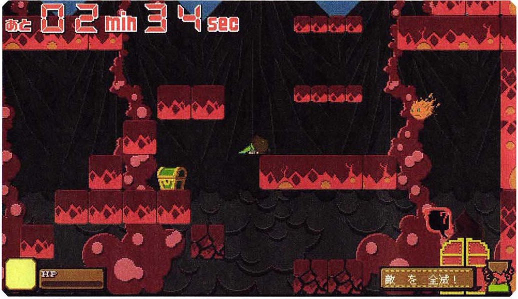


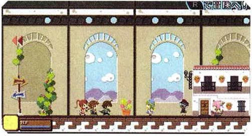
HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **March** Pub **Tecmo KOEI** Dev **KOEI Canada**

Warriors Legends of Troy

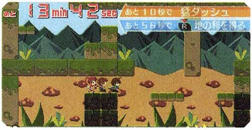
A western dynasty rises

Spawned from the minds behind the *Dynasty Warriors* franchise, *Warriors: Legends of Troy* offers quality time with legendary figures from the both the Greek and Trojan participants of the Trojan War. Though the gameplay betrays its *Dynasty Warriors* heritage, the story is told in an interesting way. Each level is preceded by lore, lacing the game with bits





▲ The old bald cheater, time, is a handy tool. The game creates levels tailored to a player's chosen time limit.



FIRST LOOK Format **PSP** ETA **Spring** Pub **Aksys Games** Dev **Opus Studio**

Jikandia The Timeless Land

Timeless? Not exactly

If the speedy challenges in *Half-Minute Hero* seemed too brisk, the upcoming action-adventure *Jikandia: The Timeless Land* offers considerable breathing room—but only if players want it. *Jikandia* may not be a sequel to that 2009 PSP favorite, despite hailing from the same developer, but the action-adventure game similarly makes time a focal point of the quest, by letting adventurers determine how much of it they'll have to complete each dungeon. As such, players will never experience the same mission twice, since the game generates each dungeon's layout, enemies, traps, and loot based on the chosen time limit.

It's an intriguing twist that should lend loads of replayability, but it's not the only thing this RPG-flavored adventure has going for it. *Jikandia's* tale of a modern-day kid thrown back in time to face a fantastical voyage is promising, plus the retro-stylized aesthetic seems like a natural progression from the charming look of *Hero*, with a wide variety of brightly colored settings promised in the mix. And while the campaign is centered on a single hero, up to four local players can set traps and battle it out in the timed challenges of the Jikandia Coliseum mode.

Clearing the schedule to play a lengthy quest can be tough, but whether players have a half-minute or half-hour to spare, *Jikandia* appears ready to provide timely entertainment. ANDREW HAYWARD

Can't Wait? Play this

Half-Minute Hero

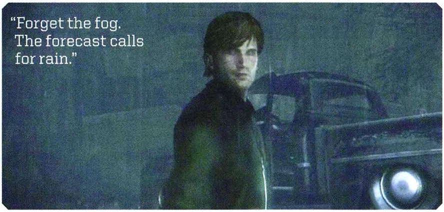
PSP, 2009

Only 30 seconds to save the world? No problem. With four different adventurers representing four distinct gameplay styles, this frenetic RPG is perfect for quick bursts of fun.

and pieces of important scenes from *The Iliad*, which many of us were forced to read during the Greek mythology portion of our high school English classes. KOEI has the right idea here: Fewer words, more battlefields laden with suckers in serious need of stabbing with swords and spears.

Unlike other *Dynasty Warriors* titles, *Troy* doesn't allow players to choose their own hero; rather a new one is assigned at the beginning of each chapter. Classically chronicled fights ensue, such as the epic clash between Hektor and Achilles, with the player assuming the role of the victorious side. There is no real attachment to either side in the war, because both have their respective jerks we wanted to punch in the face, but connecting with the characters doesn't really seem to be the point. *Troy* is about playing one of the most well known stories in history and kicking serious ass. ANNE LEWIS

One-Trick Pony
Silent Hill: Downpour (Konami)



"Forget the fog.
The forecast calls
for rain."

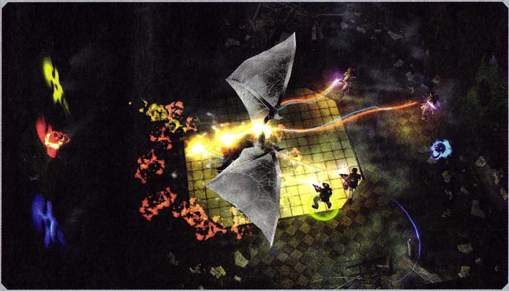
The latest on...

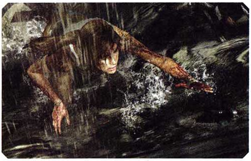
New shots, new games, new info

Ghostbusters Sanctum of Slime

Format **PSN** ETA **Spring** Pub **Atari** Dev **Wanako Studios**

It would be silly to ask to whom players should place the call when there's something weird, and it don't look good. It's time to suit up for another romp through New York in this PSN sequel to *Ghostbusters: The Video Game*. This four-player adventure focuses on a team of ghost-busting rookies sent to haunted locales to rid them of angry spirits. In the beginning of the game we were assaulted by ghastly bellboys in the lobby of a hotel/insane asylum, and the level concludes—as all games should—in the kitchen fighting a chef. Team up with friends locally or online to take on these and other oddities.

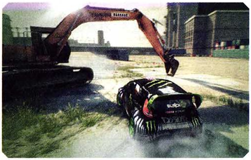




Tomb Raider

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2011** Pub **Square Enix**
Dev **Crystal Dynamics**

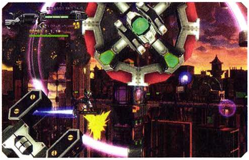
Lara Croft is back and looking super-fine in the upcoming reboot of the *Tomb Raider* series. We'll see how Croft got to be so badass as we follow her through her early years, breaking into the apparently dangerous field of archaeology.



Dirt 3

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2011** Pub **Codemasters**
Dev **Codemasters**

Dirt 3 has our motors revving with new environments, new cars, and a totally awesome new Gymkhana mode where players can complete challenges however they choose in an arena full of ramps, obstacles, and smashable junk.



Hard Corps Uprising

Format **PSN** ETA **Spring** Pub **Konami**
Dev **ARC System Works**

Inspired by *Contra Hard Corps*, *Hard Corps: Uprising* is on its way to PSN. This 2D side-scrolling run-and-gunner will have local and online co-op with voice chat support so we can scream commands at people far away.

Crysis 2

Format **PS3** ETA **March 2011** Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Crytek Studios**

We can't wait to get our paws on the Nanosuit 2.0. The online multiplayer modes dilute the single-player suit's powers a bit, but class selections give the player a little something extra for the fight, be it invisibility, stealth decoys, or massive shockwaves.

Back to the Future The Game

Format **PSN** ETA **Q1** Pub **Telltale Games** Dev **Telltale Games**

It's hard to believe, but it's been 25 years since the first *Back to the Future* film's release. Now, Marty McFly must go back in time to enlist the aid of a young Doc Brown in order to preserve the space-time continuum in this point-and-click adventure game.

Spare Parts

Format **PSN** ETA **Q1** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **EA Bright Light**

Robot pals Mar-T and Chip need to get off the planet they've been dumped on. Finding parts for the crashed spaceship (voiced by Simon Pegg) seems to be their only option in this cooperative *Ratchet & Clank*-ish endeavor. We await a future full of both rock 'em and, of course, sock 'em.

El Shaddai Ascension of the Metatron

Format **PS3** ETA **Q2** Pub **Ignition Ent.** Dev **Ignition Tokyo**

El Shaddai mixes biblical mythology and Lucifer's designer clothing with an action-adventure story blended with platforming elements. And that's not even half the goodness to come in this gorgeous-looking game.

Saku
Sai
Ripping Torrent
L. Poison In

Naruto Shippuden Kizuna Drive

Format **PSP** ETA **Spring** Pub **Namco Bandai**
Dev **Namco Bandai**

Lord knows Orochimaru has tried, but you just can't keep the orange-clad ninja down. Naruto's back in a new story, with multiplayer festivities in which players get to design their own ninja dream team.

Portal 2

Format **PS3** ETA **April** Pub **Valve** Dev **Valve**

As if a whole new solo adventure wasn't enough, *Portal 2* also features a cooperative mode in the form of two robotic companions completing ridiculous tasks set out for them by the utterly insane GLaDOS.

Gut Reaction

What's strong and what's wrong

▲Portable Power Powerful and beautiful. But is the PSP2 everything we hoped for? Check back next issue for a full report.

▲Massive Heroics Defying some early negative buzz, *DC Universe Online* proves MMOs can work on PS3.

▲Sedentary Lifestyles With GamesRadar's cheats app, we don't have to leave our couches to find a FAQ.

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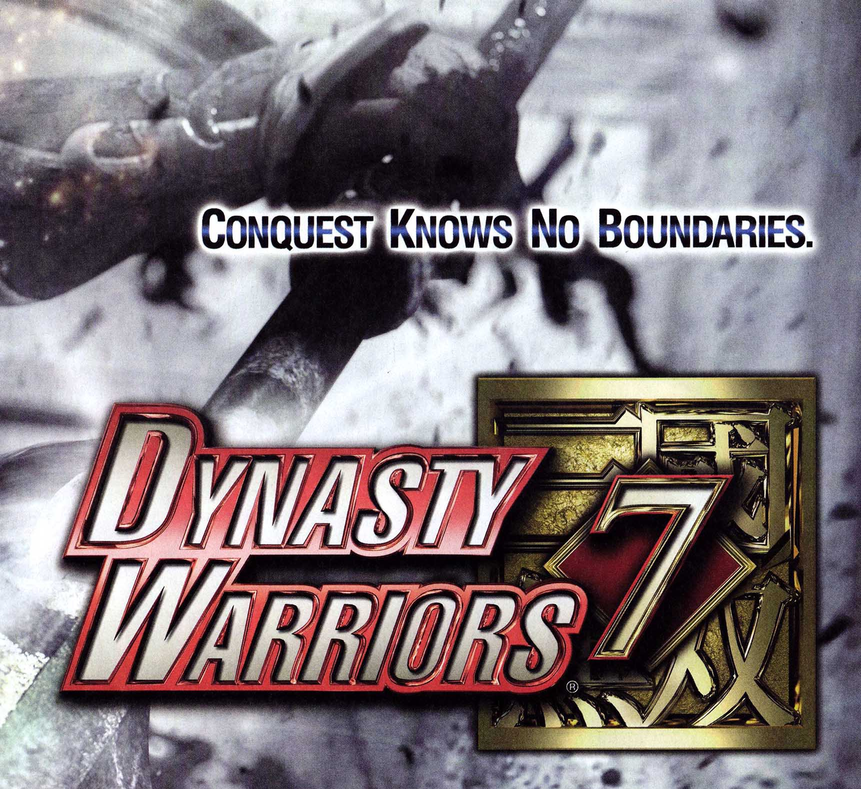

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PS3 PlayStation 3 PlayStation Network XBOX 360 XBOX LIVE TECMO KOEI AMERICA CORP. KOEI

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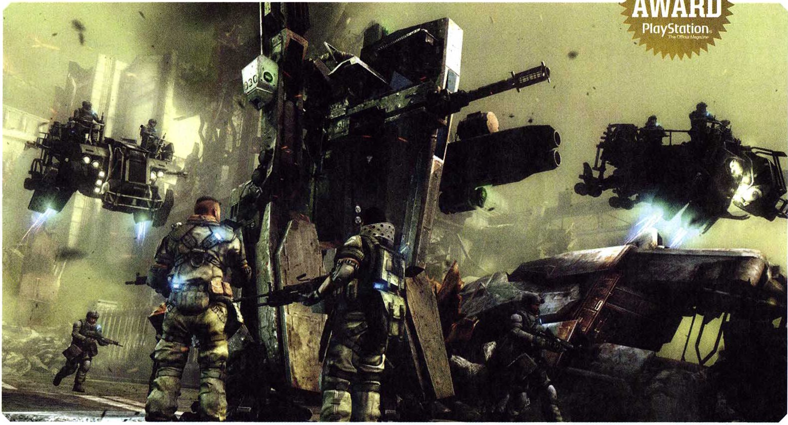
Battles are won or lost, but the war for first-person shooter dominance never ends. Does Killzone 3 have the firepower to be the new top gun?

IN THE

ZONE

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
The Official Magazine



Killzone 3

The cutting edge of combat

PS3
KILLZONE 3

Info
Format PS3 **Pub** SCEA
Dev Guerrilla Games
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Mature
It's like *Starship Troopers* without the horrible acting.

There's an art to creating an exceptional blade; to forming a weapon strong and true, capable of holding an edge, but flexible enough to absorb massive impacts without cracking or breaking; to fabricating a tool of exquisite balance, so that it may be easily wielded and perform its purpose with lethal efficiency. Shaping such a blade requires knowledge and experience, time and passion. It's not just a process, it's a journey.

The journey, for *Killzone*, began in 2004 on the PS2 as a competent but unremarkable effort, memorable more for its story scenario than its gameplay—the equivalent of a workaday knife purchased from some home shopping channel. It continued on the PSP in 2006's *Killzone: Liberation* with an incremental sharpening of action and storyline. But it wasn't until 2009's visually charged *Killzone 2* that the franchise was finally honed into a combat-ready blade.

Killzone 3 takes that blade, jams it into a Helghast's eye socket, and twists it.

Back in Hel

Scolar Visari is dead. Our apologies if we spoiled the ending for those who've yet to play *Killzone 2*, but the demise of the megalomaniacal Helghan emperor is only the beginning in *Killzone 3*; the war is far from over.

For the Helghast, the power vacuum left by their enigmatic leader requires filling. In contention: Admiral Orlock and ambitious arms industrialist Jorhan Stahl. The power struggle offers new insight into the Helghan hierarchy, a society on the brink of civil war, barely held together by both faction's common hatred of the Interplanetary Strategic Alliance (ISA). Despite the devastation wrought on Helghan, the Helghast have revealed only a small portion of their military might, and fueled by Stahl Arms' newly developed weapons technology, they stand poised to wreak their vengeance on the ISA far beyond the confines of their homeworld.

The remaining ISA troops, in contrast, have lost contact with Earth and are solely focused on survival as they fight for their lives. Returning *Killzone 2* combat commander Captain Narville has transformed the depleted force into a guerrilla army that strikes when it can, but primarily hides and avoids major engagements with the Helghast. Yet, as months go by, the situation has become

Killzone 3 takes a blade, jams it into a Helghast's eye socket, and twists it

increasingly desperate, forcing Narville to order a dangerous infiltration of a downed ISA cruiser to reestablish communication with Earth.

But our focus is on sergeants Tomas "Sev" Sevchenko and Rico Velasquez. The first-person action in *Killzone 3* is played from Sev's perspective, in concert with the intense, but unpredictably volatile, Rico. As is expected of a cover shooter the gameplay is combat-focused, but one of *Killzone 3's* major accomplishments is its story presentation and character development. Gorgeously rendered cutscenes that feature superb voice acting do a wonderful job of expanding upon the *Killzone* universe and revealing the motivations of the characters. The story itself isn't particularly original, relying more on atmosphere and presentation than plot ingenuity, but the core players now feature a depth and humanity to them that was lacking in the previous game. Rico in particular has evolved into an intense, dynamic leader where he once seemed a selfish, irresponsible a–hole. Yes, *Killzone 3* actually succeeds in rectifying the previous game's greatest flaw; it actually makes us care for the characters.

Beyond the backdrop of the narrative, the actual story arc through the gameplay is one frantic, unrelenting ride. *Killzone 3* grabbed us by the scruff of the neck, tossed us into battle, and pummeled us with level after level of pure intensity, alternating among frenetic foot-bound firefights, airborne combat, armored confrontations, high-speed rail-shooter sequences, and some truly epic set-pieces. There were also occasional stealthy segments that finally afforded us the opportunity to slow down and admire *Killzone 3's* genre-leading visuals, but the cumulative experience remained a constant leap from the frying pan into the fire and back again. We were *there* while playing; running, shooting, fighting, as if our fellow troopers were constantly screaming, *"GO! GO! GO!"* in our ears. When a shooter can convey the adrenaline-fueled rush of combat by inspiring a tunnel-visioned focus on the enemy's extermination and our own survival, it has succeeded.

Online Ops

The three match types in *Killzone 3* include twists and interpretations of familiar deathmatch and capture-the-flag modes, but it's the integration of story, brutal melee kills, and the ability to man Exoskeletons and jetpacks that jacks up the intensity of online matches.

Guerrilla Warfare

16 player

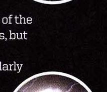
Killzone's standard team deathmatch mode, with victory determined by hitting a preset body count or getting the most kills in a time-limited match. There are a million ways to die, but having our throat slit from behind felt extra personal.

Warzone

24 player

Warzone cycles through five different mission-types during each match, requiring quick shifts in tactics and playstyle. Most of the missions are CTF variations, but being the marked man in Assassination was particularly tense and enjoyable.

Operations



24 player

Killzone 3's most compelling MP mode, Operations consists of a series of mission objectives like planting explosives or breaching doors. Achieving (or denying) an objective triggers story cutscenes featuring top in-match performers that contributed to the cause.

Stealth and marksmanship are the keys to surviving Helghan's Kaznan jungle.

Into the Fire

While *Killzone 3* excels at immersing us in its mood and momentum, a first-person shooter is ultimately judged by its gameplay mechanics. The finest examples of the breed, like *Quake*, *Half-Life*, the *Call of Duty* games, all manage to convey a unique sensation that's particular to each franchise. It's a *feel* that's achieved in large part, we suspect, by a microscopic attention to detail and a relentless pursuit of perfection. And like our proverbial blade, it's a level of refinement and development that Guerrilla Games has honed to a razor's edge in *Killzone 3*.

Graphic cutscenes make melee kills feel so...personal

Everything in the game has a satisfying heft to it. Weapons in particular have a perceptible weight to them, so swinging a light machine gun around to bear on a target takes a fraction of a second more than with a submachine gun. How's it done? From our observation, there are minute variations in the time from when the aiming reticule lands on a target and the weapon animation brings the barrel in line. It's a seemingly minor detail but it imparts every pistol, machine gun, assault rifle, and launcher in the game with its own unique feel. Other elements like muzzle flash, recoil, and rate of fire seem to factor into the equation as well and are especially noticeable when using the more futuristic weapons like the Arc Cannon and WASP rocket launcher available later in the game.

The communication of mass and physics carries over to *Killzone 3's* vehicles. The mech-like Exoskeleton and jetpack have been widely publicized, but we also hopped into an ISA tank, an armored hot-rod-like Hammer, the snowmobile-on-steroids Ice Saw, and a ride we won't specify, but that's not confined to Helghan's atmosphere. Not all of the transportation is freely navigable, but even the rail-shooter-based vehicles were a blast, with each offering a uniquely satisfying way to explode enemies. Our one lament is that only the Exo and jetpack are available for use in multiplayer.

But nothing illustrates *Killzone 3's* visceral feel better than its brutal melee kills. Whereas *Killzone 2's* melee attacks were limited to the standard smash of a rifle butt or a slash of a knife, the new game's attacks revolve around a series of graphically violent cutscenes depicting neck snapping, knife insertions, and even eye gouging. There are probably only a half-dozen animations all told,

At times, it's difficult to tell who're the bigger threat to Helghan: the power hungry Orlock and Stahl, or Rico and Sev.

but contextual camera shifts prevent the sequences from feeling stale or recycled. It's actually quite amazing how engaging this small element is, and how it manages to make melee kills feel so...personal. This feeling carried over to multiplayer as well—succumbing to a brutal melee from a live opponent made us blind with lust for vengeance.

The one area in which *Killzone 3* strays from its adherence to realistic physics is in player movement. As befitting soldiers in full battle gear, motion in the previous game seemed a tad heavy-footed with a sprint that was more akin to a trot than a dash. The pace has picked up in *Killzone 3* and, while some may decry it as unrealistic, it imparted a heightened sense of urgency when we broke for our next cover spot or tried to close distance on an enemy. From our perspective, the increase in gameplay tempo and responsiveness is worth any perceived trade-off.

Major Engagement

A peculiar and unexpected side effect of playing *Killzone 3* was how we found ourselves comparing the game to Sega's recent third-person cover shooter *Vanquish* as much as we compared it to top-tier first-person shooters like *COD: Black Ops*. While *Killzone 3* lacks *Vanquish's* outright focus on speed and acrobatics, both games share a sci-fi future-war theme with a focus on cover-based combat and, at times, epic confrontations against colossal enemies. While we enjoyed *Vanquish*, it's exactly those two common elements that distinguish *Killzone 3*.

The cover system simply works better than those in other games. It's incredibly smooth and intuitive, allowing for blind shots and letting us peek from behind cover with a simple prod of the Left-analog stick to deliver fire. There was a minimum of the finicky stickiness inherent to these systems—the imprecision and fussiness that often results in our death when we intended to stay behind or break from cover. The only complaint we have about the system is the lack of the ability to lie completely prone as in a *Call of Duty* game, a feature we especially crave for multiplayer matches.

And while we're a little reticent to go into too much detail, we can't help but gush about the confrontation with the MAWLR that occurs in the final quarter of the game. It's an epic ground and airborne face-off against a 280-foot-tall mechanized arachnid that seemingly never ends, and one of *Killzone 3's* signature moments. But it also highlights our biggest gripe about the game: With a campaign that can be played through on easier settings in a mere five or six hours, those signature moments fly by. Ratcheting up the difficulty level will extend playtime, but we were left craving more of *Killzone 3's* unrelentingly intense gameplay.

Then again, multiplayer increases the play value exponentially. Practically every area of the online multiplayer, from streamlined matchmaking to a more robust 45-rank reward system, has been upgraded and improved as well. Again, we're greedy for more than the eight maps that come on the game disc, but here's hoping a map pack DLC will follow in short order. Since tastes and preferences vary, we can't say *Killzone 3's* multiplayer is better than *Black Op's*, but it's comparable and brings some welcome new twists to the battlefield.

Considering the exceptional level of scrutiny, polish, and care evident in every aspect of *Killzone 3's* gameplay and presentation, it's easy to see that Guerilla Games and its franchise are at the top of their game. The blade shines brightly and with a razor's edge; the time for killing is here. **ROGER BURCHILL**

PlayStation The Official Magazine 10

What's It Like?

In 3D

Call of Duty: Black Ops delivered a deep, solid view experience that made the TV screen seem like a window we could climb through. But prolonged 3D sessions in *Black Ops* strained our eyes with significant ghosting, double vision, and distracting HUD issues. *Killzone's* shallower depth-of-field and its use of layers makes for a subtler effect, but it's more comfortable for longer play sessions. While the 3D mode wouldn't compel us to buy a new 3D-capable HDTV, it is certainly worth experiencing if you already own one.

With Move

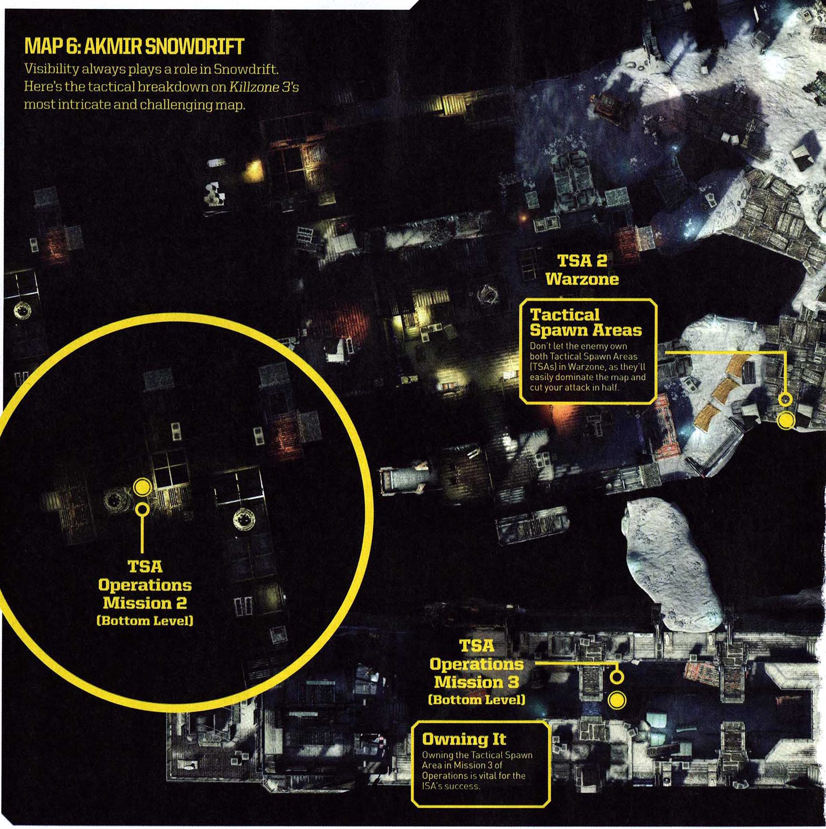
Move can shine in casual game applications, but *Killzone 3* is the first instance where we felt the motion control system actually improved our play in a hardcore game. Aiming was quick and accurate, reloading and melee attacks required just an intuitive flick, and a wide range of setting options allowed us to tune response to our preferences. Overall, Move made *Killzone 3* feel like a more interactive, fully navigable *Time Crisis* game. Sony's Sharp Shooter peripheral (pictured), which we'll review once a production unit is available, should only reinforce that impression.

ZONE ANALYSIS

Guerrilla Games' lead multiplayer designer Martin Connor reveals strategies and tips for thriving and surviving on Helghan.

MAP 6: AKMIR SNOWDRIFT

Visibility always plays a role in Snowdrift. Here's the tactical breakdown on *Killzone 3*'s most intricate and challenging map.

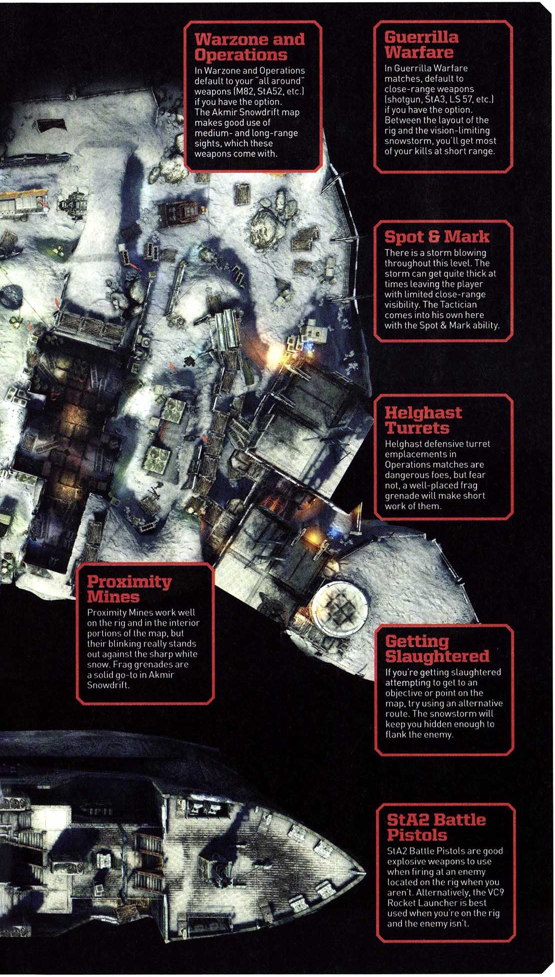

TSA Warzone/ Operations Mission 1
TSA 2 Warzone
TSA Operations Mission 2 (Bottom Level)
TSA Operations Mission 3 (Bottom Level)

Tactical Spawn Areas

Don't let the enemy own both Tactical Spawn Areas (TSAs) in Warzone, as they'll easily dominate the map and cut your attack in half.

Owning It

Owning the Tactical Spawn Area in Mission 3 of Operations is vital for the ISA's success.



Warzone and Operations

In Warzone and Operations default to your "all around" weapons (M82, StA52, etc.) if you have the option. The Akmir Snowdrift map makes good use of medium- and long-range sights, which these weapons come with.

Guerrilla Warfare

In Guerrilla Warfare matches, default to close-range weapons (shotgun, StA3, LS 57, etc.) if you have the option. Between the layout of the rig and the vision-limiting snowstorm, you'll get most of your kills at short range.

Spot & Mark

There is a storm blowing throughout this level. The storm can get quite thick at times leaving the player with limited close-range visibility. The Tactician comes into his own here with the Spot & Mark ability.

Helghast Turrets

Helghast defensive turret emplacements in Operations matches are dangerous foes, but fear not, a well-placed frag grenade will make short work of them.

Proximity Mines

Proximity Mines work well on the rig and in the interior portions of the map, but their blinking really stands out against the sharp white snow. Frag grenades are a solid go-to in Akmir Snowdrift.

Getting Slaughtered

If you're getting slaughtered attempting to get to an objective or point on the map, try using an alternative route. The snowstorm will keep you hidden enough to flank the enemy.

StA2 Battle Pistols

StA2 Battle Pistols are good explosive weapons to use when firing at an enemy located on the rig when you aren't. Alternatively, the VC9 Rocket Launcher is best used when you're on the rig and the enemy isn't.

MAP RECON

Get a competitive edge with these strategies and tips for *Killzone 3*'s seven other multiplayer maps.

Map 1: Corinth Highway

(Warzone)

- When running from an enemy Exo, head for areas that are too small or confined for it to follow.
- Taking the route under the highway is safer then taking the route over the highway.

Map 2: Pyrrhus Crater

(Warzone)

- Proximity mines can be very effective in guarding the narrow Tactical Spawn Area (TSA) area.
- The ISA science stations can be protected from the inside. Just be careful to exit before the charges go off.
- Avoid the lines of sight of the miniguns in the central building.

Map 3: Bilgarsk Boulevard

(Warzone)

- It's easier to protect both Search & Destroy placements by taking the high ground.
- The bridges at either end of the street are good spots for Marksmen.
- Avoid being out in the open on the main street by using the back alleys.
- Marksmen can effectively cover the center crater from the bridges at either ends of the level.

Map 4: Turbine Concourse

- The TSAs in this map have a big impact on which faction eventually wins the match. Take them as soon as possible.
- There is a switch to deactivate the EMP blast. Locate it and you can earn extra XP as well as gain an advantage by deactivating it.

Map 5: Frozen Dam

- Do your best to stay out of the central area under the dam. It's open ground with little cover and can become a lethal kill zone.
- A lot of the interior spaces have decrepit roof structures so players are still vulnerable to a well-placed mortar strike.

Map 7: MAWLR Graveyard

(Warzone)

- If the speaker spawns in the crusher during S&R, it can be used as bait to crush enemy players.
- A cloaked Marksman waiting at the crush button might not be seen by someone running through the crusher.

Map 7: MAWLR Graveyard

(Operations)

- The tunnel under the crusher can be used to quickly get from one side of it to the other.
- During SCaR (Scavenge and Retrieve), have part of the team stay and defend the battery dispenser while others deliver the battery to the power core.

Map 8: Kaznan Jungle

- The numerous caverns in this level make for prime kill zones. Navigate around them if you can, but tossing in a grenade (especially from above) can be an easy way to frag multiple enemies.
- Plenty of dark nooks and crannies make the melee-minded Infiltrator and Marksman particularly effective.
- Strategic placement of turrets by Engineers can make all the difference in this constricted, disorienting map.

Career Plan

Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of *Killzone's* career classes is key to combat effectiveness. Learn each career's characteristics and then play within them.

Infiltrator

Make sure not to activate the disguise while running with your own faction—it's a dead giveaway. Flank the enemy team and then deploy your disguise to wreak maximum havoc but, remember, the Tacticians' Spot & Mark ability can reveal your true identity to enemy players.

Marksman

Once the Marksman's secondary abilities have been leveled up, he will protect any nearby faction mates from showing up on the enemy radar when an enemy Tactician uses his Spot & Mark ability. This makes the Marksman not only great at distance but, for Bodycount in particular, extremely effective at close-range while leading the team in under enemy radar.

Engineer

Deploying your turret on high ground maximizes its effectiveness. Turrets are also really handy for defending Capture & Hold and Search & Destroy areas. The Engineer can also maintain the health of an Exoskeleton so stay close by to provide maximum support whenever a teammate mounts an Exo.

Tactician

Tactical Spawn Areas (TSAs) play a telling role in which faction wins a round—the greater the number of Tacticians capturing a TSA, the quicker it will be captured. The Tactition's Sentry Drones are the ideal defenders for Search & Destroy objectives and Capture & Hold areas.

Field Medic

The ultimate support class. If you've leveled up your secondary abilities then you'll automatically speed up the health regeneration process for any nearby teammates. But the Medic's ability to survive bleedout can spring a nasty surprise on the enemy faction. If the Medic is not executed while laying wounded on the ground, he is able to stand up at the location (once the respawn timer expires) and surprise an unwitting enemy. This ability can only be used once per round.

Brutal Interrogation

Guerrilla's game director Mathijs de Jonge takes us into the Killzone

What's your favorite moment in Killzone 3?
It's when the space flight sequence starts. To me it gives a great sense of achievement—although at that point, the game isn't over yet. You know you're getting close to your initial goal, getting off that planet. It works great.

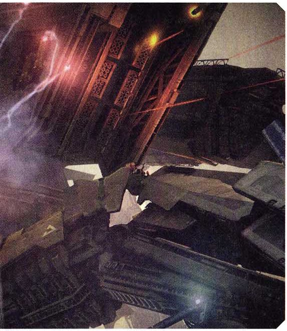
The language seems to be toned down a bit from *Killzone 2*, but the violence—especially the graphic melee kills—seems ratcheted up a notch. What's the thinking behind that?
When we started on *Killzone 2*, we had the idea to give the characters different personalities and being profane was one attribute that we thought was a way to differentiate some of them. But when we finally determined it wasn't the brightest idea, it was too late to take it out. For *Killzone 3*, we simply said no more swearing or cursing unless a character has a very good reason for it and it fits the situation.

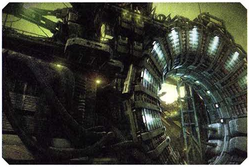
The melee in *Killzone 2* was functional but it was never as intense and in-your-face as we wanted it to be. So we created a system that basically glues characters together to allow their animations being played in sync and from the appropriate angles. The first iterations had quite gentle stomps to the face and it didn't really trigger any emotional response in the player. Only when we had the player swap to his knife to take down the enemy did it start feeling right and do justice to its name: *brutal* melee.

The Arc Cannon and the WASP are new weapons, but the Electricity Gun has disappeared. Any particular reason why it was removed?
That gun comes with a rather elaborate electricity system that we couldn't see fitting into any of the missions in *Killzone 3*. With the addition of the new guns like the WASP that fires a swarm of missiles and the Arc Cannon that turns enemies into goo, we felt we included sufficient variety and excitement and didn't need to spend the extra effort on supporting the Electricity Gun.

Can you point to one particular element that's your proudest achievement?
It's the moments when all the play actions are chained and combined. Dodge enemy fire, slide into cover, vault over it, stab an enemy in the eye—Rico shoots some extra bullets into him to make sure he stays down—and you think, "Wow, that was awesome!" *This* is emergent gameplay—gameplay that gives you a thrill.

How did 3D and Move integration affect the development process?
Although those features make the game bigger—you have to test more options/combinations—it didn't have a big effect on the





powerful Exoskeletons. These wouldn't "fit" in a contemporary-style game, which is a shame for them because they add lots of fun!

What's your favorite class or loadout setup for multiplayer?
My current favorite is the Marksman. I love sniping from across a map and then using the cloak suit to relocate and stay out of danger.

development process itself. What we did for Move, for example, is that we had a dedicated senior programmer and senior game designer working together on the design and implementation from start to finish. They owned that feature and also attended external playtesting to see what worked and what didn't. We started early on both 3D and Move so we had a lot of time to make it really good rather than a quick patch at the end. Regarding difficulty balancing for Move, we didn't implement anything special for the Move other than a user-configurable locking system—which is there to help players that are new to shooters and the DualShock controller. At the same time, hardcore players can switch off the locking system since it would make the game too easy for them.

Any secrets in the game that you'd care to reveal?
Few know that you can actually knock over enemies when you perform a slide move. It's a great way of taking enemies down—or making them fall out of windows.

The *Call of Duty* franchise currently sets the standard for console FPS online multiplayer. How do you think *Killzone 3* stacks up to the competition? What differentiates its multiplayer?
Apart from the fact that *Killzone 3* is very accessible to every type of gamer, it is the blend between sci-fi and realism that gives the game an edge over the competition. In other games, players often feel as if they're just a floating gun, taking down enemies. *Killzone 3*, however, feels much more realistic as the guns actually feel like they have weight. The sci-fi setting also allows us to go crazy in terms of what players can do, like fly agile jetpacks or drive the

Mission Play

Pay attention to the active mission during multiplayer matches. Some career classes are stronger than others for specific mission types.

Search & Destroy

The Infiltrator, once leveled up, is faster than any other class. Once his primary abilities have been fully leveled up, he is also faster at placing and defusing bombs, making him the power player in Search & Destroy.

Tacticians and Engineers can provide excellent defense of a Search & Destroy location. Placing a proximity mine over the location where a D-Charge is to be placed is an excellent tactic regardless of whether you are attacking or defending.

Capture & Hold

The Tactician, once leveled up, can take Capture & Hold areas faster than any other class. Multiple Tacticians will result in much faster capture times.

Engineers provide the ideal defense for Capture & Hold with a well-placed Sentry Turret.

Bodycount

If the Tactician has leveled up his secondary abilities, he will be able to spot and mark all enemy players on the radar. Additionally, all enemy players within 30 meters will be marked on all your team's HUDs, making the Tactician the ideal class for Bodycount.

Assassination

A fully leveled up Marksman can remain cloaked until he makes a kill, making him the ideal career class for Assassination.

Search & Retrieve

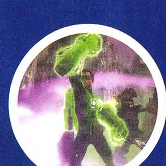
Play Search & Retrieve like a game of football—gain as many yards for your team as possible. When you collect the speaker, get it as close to the return location as you can.

Using the Infiltrator or Medic will make the job a little easier. The Infiltrator is slightly faster than other classes and the Medic's faster health regeneration allows him to absorb more damage.

MARVEL VS DC

The heaviest hitters square off in six upcoming games. Which game—and universe—will reign supreme?

Face front, true believer! It's time for a fantastic feature in the Mighty Marvel (and decidedly delicious) DC Comics style. Comic-book heroes and villains are taking over the videogame world, and PTOM has got the inside scoop on a sensational sextet of titles. Get ready, because the clock on the wall suggests it is, in fact, clobbering time.



WORLD EXCLUSIVE SCREENS
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Pub **Sega** Dev **Next Level** ETA **Summer**

Captain America Super Soldier

Have shield, will travel

When it comes to superheroes, a lot can happen in two minutes: a world can be saved, a disaster averted, a damsel relieved of her distress. Two minutes with Sega producer Morgan Roberts, however, is all it takes to prove *Captain America: Super Soldier* is more about red, white, and blue than green—a game worthy of its hero, rather than a licensed cash-cow used to trick money out of unsuspecting moms and aunts on the hunt for a birthday present.

There's no questioning Roberts' credentials as a man raised on comic books, although he admits Captain America wasn't his superhero of choice growing up: "I used to have a poster on my wall of Wolverine, claws extended, coming down on Captain America. I was like, 'Wolverine would kick him! He'd tear him apart!'" Despite this, working on *Super Soldier* was just the nudge he needed to delve deeper into the history of the star-spangled Avenger. "As I got involved in the project I started reading a lot of the backstory that [Ed] Brubaker did, introducing Bucky as the Winter Soldier and leading to Civil War," he explains. "That's what gave me the inspiration and what got me excited."

While it's reassuring to know the man in charge is aware of the history, Roberts doesn't want to be weighed down by it. Rather than trying to retell the story of this summer's movie, *Captain America: The First Avenger*, Sega is moving in an entirely different direction. "Early on we were like, Okay, we'll have to meet the schedule, but we can do a completely unique story. Let's branch out, introduce new characters you're not going to see in the movie, do a completely different storyline." The team went to additional lengths not usually found in a movie tie-in. "We got Christos Gage, who's a Marvel writer: he's written *Avengers*, he's written *Iron Man*, he's written *Captain America*. [He] has an extreme knowledge about the lore. He wrote a fantastic story that we sent to Marvel...and they said, 'This is awesome, go with it.'"

Brutal Legend

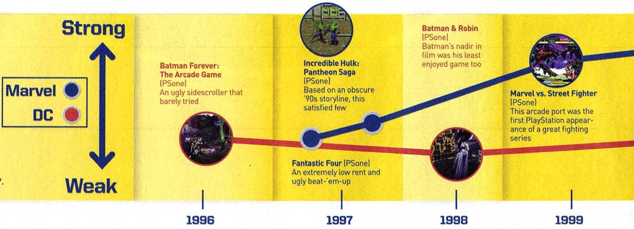
Gage's narrative takes place inside a massive citadel under the control of the HYDRA antagonists; a deliberate move on the part of Sega to limit action to a particular location. "We want to constrain you by setting up this castle, which will be like Rapture in *BioShock* or something, but completely with its own identity," Roberts says. Instead of the art-deco sheen of Rapture, though, Cap gets to swing his shield in a sprawling, inescapable gothic playset. (That tinkling sound? That's the *Batman: Arkham Asylum* bells ringing.)

The gameplay influences on *Soldier* are clear. We viewed the game at an early stage, but it appears to be executing its moves with a pleasingly simple brutality. It's a crisply segmented mix of combat, puzzles, and acrobatics, with the action framed by telling camera angles and zooms to emerging enemies. The context-sensitive combat looks particularly sharp, slowing down the action for compound-fracturing close-ups of the biggest hits. To set him apart from the knuckle-dusting thuggery of Batman, Cap's moves revolve around his iconic shield. Morgan explains:

Fun Fact: In his early adventures, Captain America routinely carried a gun.

Heroes of Our Time

Comic-book heroes haven't always had it easy when it comes to their videogame translations. Take a stroll through the PlayStation's checkered comic-book history.



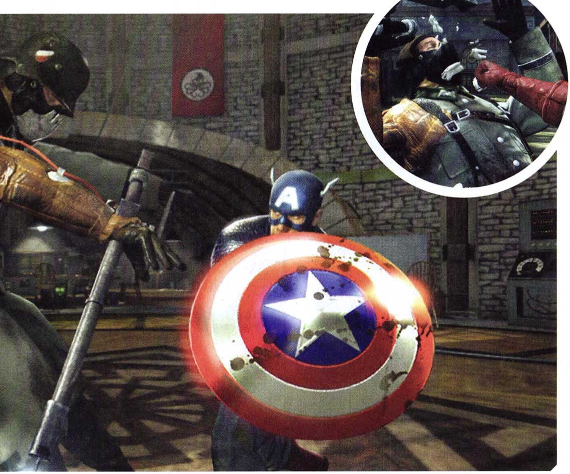
Batman Forever: The Arcade Game (PSone)
An ugly sidescroller that barely tried

Incredible Hulk: Pantheon Saga (PSone)
Based on an obscure '90s storyline, this satisfied few

Fantastic Four (PSone)
An extremely low rent and ugly beat-'em-up

Batman & Robin (PSone)
Batman's nadir in film was his least enjoyed game too

Marvel vs. Street Fighter (PSone)
This arcade port was the first PlayStation appearance of a great fighting series



Wimpy Steve Rogers became Captain America after volunteering to take an injection of Dr. Erskine's Super-Soldier syrum.

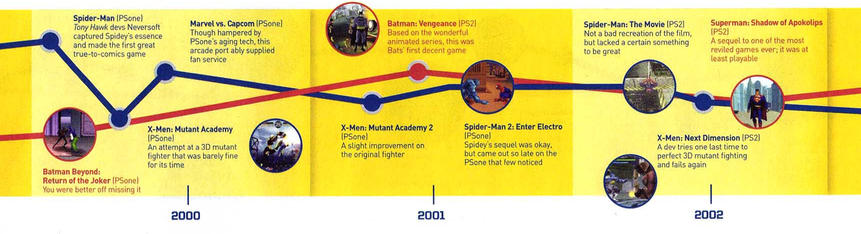
Combat looks particularly sharp, slowing the action for compound-fracturing close-ups

"[We] integrate the shield into everything he does. He uses it almost like a kung fu artist would use a prop; he smashes people with it, he'll take out whole a group of guys by spinning around and hitting, he smashes it into the ground to stagger everybody." It makes the batarang look like a child's Halloween toy; a Stark-designed indestructo-Frisbee that Cap can use at range to clatter groups of enemies, before it miraculously returns to hand. If timed correctly, Cap can even knock bullets back at armed goons, a trick players will need to learn in order to get past certain sections. Much like his scowly DC Comics rival, the takedowns are brutal, but Cap's attacks have a shining glimmer of justice about them. It takes a special kind of hero to make it seem heroic to jam a metal disc into the base of an enemy's skull, but Captain America pulls it off.

Close Comparisons

Comparisons with the Dark Knight's last outing aren't unfounded, or unwanted. "*Arkham* was a fantastic game, brilliant game," Morgan says. "But we actually started before we'd ever seen it." Despite this, Morgan accepts that when Sega finally did see *Asylum*, it took on board some of the things the game clearly did well. "Instead of getting really upset, we were inspired by it."

From what we've seen, there are still areas that will need their vibranium polished—locations can feel sparse compared to the grimy claustrophobia of *Asylum*, and there's a danger of combat becoming repetitive. However, if Cap has indeed watched Batman's moves closely enough, this shouldn't be a problem. In a universe where tie-in games often have all the depth of Thin Man (yes, he is a real superhero), *Soldier* may yet have the skills to athletically vault over the competition. Or, at the very least, bedazzle the competition with its embrace of the punching spirit of the American fighting soldier.



Spider-Man (PSone)
Tony Hawk devs Neversoft captured Spidey's essence and made the first great true-to-comics game

Batman Beyond: Return of the Joker (PSone)
You were better off missing it

X-Men: Mutant Academy (PSone)
An attempt at a 3D mutant fighter that was barely fine for its time

Marvel vs. Capcom (PSone)
Though hampered by PSone's aging tech, this arcade port ably supplied fan service

X-Men: Mutant Academy 2 (PSone)
A slight improvement on the original fighter

Batman: Vengeance (PS2)
Based on the wonderful animated series, this was Bats' first decent game

Spider-Man 2: Enter Electro (PSone)
Spidey's sequel was okay, but came out so late on the PSone that few noticed

Spider-Man: The Movie (PS2)
Not a bad recreation of the film, but lacked a certain something to be great

X-Men: Next Dimension (PS2)
A dev tries one last time to perfect 3D mutant fighting and fails again

Superman: Shadow of Apokolips (PS2)
A sequel to one of the most reviled games ever; it was at least playable

Heroes and villains in *DCUO* can choose a mentor, power and movement sets, and a weapon. This chap here has machine guns.

Pub **Sony Online Entertainment** Dev **SOE Austin** ETA **Out Now**

DC Universe Online

It's a bird, it's a plane, it's Fistheart!

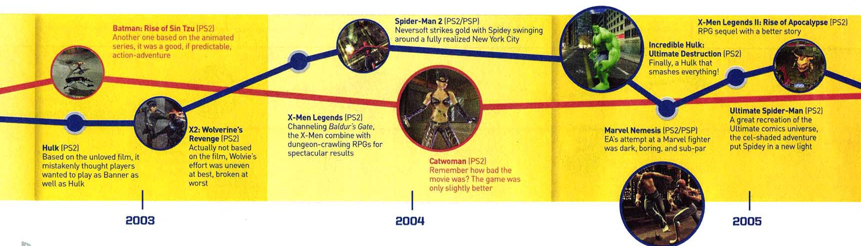
A confession: I am Fistheart The Explodinator. Oh, but *DC Universe Online*, the PS3's first massively multiplayer online role-playing game, has a letter cap for superhero (and supervillain) names, forcing me to contract my magnificent *nom de guerre* to FistheartttheExplodi; someone is getting punched by my Fistheart over this.

Fistheart is a jovial sort, oftentimes humorously reminiscing about his great criminal works, which predominantly revolve around his gloved fists being rammed into some miscreant's poorly washed face. *DCUO* allows for character customization in many ways, and it seems fitting Fistheart might do well to emulate, personality-wise, his comical mentor, the clown prince of crime, aka Batman's foe, the Joker. As a classical villain, Fistheart wears a top hat and monocle, but only because fashion dictates such. And it is impossible to confirm or deny Fistheart also has an afro, because no one—and I mean no one—would dare try to divest this treacherous blackguard of his hat.

These choices, as with characteristics such as body type and personality are purely aesthetic, and don't influence Fistheart's powers or fighting prowess. They help flesh out Fistheart's evil magnificence, much as Fistheart's occasional bouts of talking about Fistheart in the third-person does.

Do-gooders tremble in fear of Fistheart's insensate evil and his suitably malevolent superhuman abilities. Each superhuman in *DCUO* can select his powers from some preset categories: mental, ice, nature, gadgets, sorcery, and so on. These power sets can be upgraded, of course, through heroic or villainous deeds. Similarly, each hero must choose a movement type (superspeed, flight, or acrobatics) and a weapon (projectile or melee). These, too, can be improved over time.

As befitting a criminal supergenius, Fistheart's powers are psionic in nature. He can use telekinesis to befuddle foes and cast illusions to hide his true form. And because, as The Fresh Prince Will Smith noted, a good run is better than a bad stand any day, Fistheart is possessed of superhuman speed. His chosen weapon is the hand blast, which, as its name suggests, is rather explosive.



Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu (PS2)
Another one based on the animated series, it was a good, if predictable, action-adventure

Hulk (PS2)
Based on the unloved film, it mistakenly thought players wanted to play as Banner as well as Hulk

X2: Wolverine's Revenge (PS2)
Actually not based on the film, Wolvie's effort was uneven at best, broken at worst

Spider-Man 2 (PS2/PSP)
Neversoft strikes gold with Spidey swinging around a fully realized New York City

X-Men Legends (PS2)
Channeling *Baldur's Gate*, the X-Men combine with dungeon-crawling RPGs for spectacular results

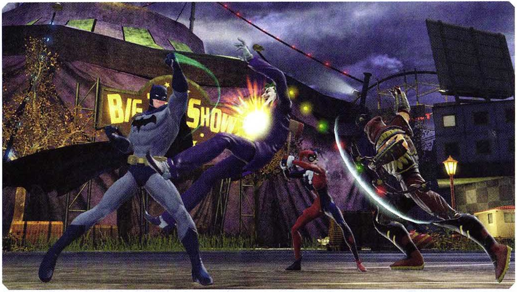
Catwoman (PS2)
Remember how bad the movie was? The game was only slightly better

Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction (PS2)
Finally, a Hulk that smashes everything!

X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse (PS2)
RPG sequel with a better story

Marvel Nemesis (PS2/PSP)
EA's attempt at a Marvel fighter was dark, boring, and sub-par

Ultimate Spider-Man (PS2)
A great recreation of the Ultimate comics universe, the cel-shaded adventure put Spidey in a new light



This Is a City of Crime

Gotham City has its crime alley, its trainyards, its industrial sewer of a river, its seedy bars where criminals and miscreants gather. It's the perfect first stop for Fistheart on his way to world domination.

The city is under siege. Would-be conqueror Brainiac has dispatched his robots to capture Gotham's citizens and wreak havoc. Criminals, both human and metahuman, are mugging citizens, planting bombs, and using the populace for their villainous experiments. Recognizable DC Comics heroes and fiends dole out missions. Futuristic hero Booster Gold tasks his charges with taking a tour of Gotham's blight. The Joker offers a reward for blowing up cop cars and booby-trapping the five-oh. Catwoman plans to steal stuff, and could use a villainous presence to serve as a diversion.

Fistheart approves, reservedly, of the free-flowing combat, which encourages creative thinking while only requiring hammering on the attack buttons. Powers can be combined in delightful ways; Fistheart enjoys lifting foes with telekinesis and then using powered blasts to hammer on them while they're paralyzed. And even defeat—something Fistheart cannot fathom the concept of, let alone will ever experience—is no great matter. Fallen superhumans drop to their knees and are given a few seconds to think about it; they are then allowed to restart from a safe house.

A criminal could get used to this kind of treatment. And Fistheart is magnanimous enough to think a hero could, too.

As befitting a criminal supergenius, Fistheart's powers are psionic in nature

My Fist, My Heart!

An origin story

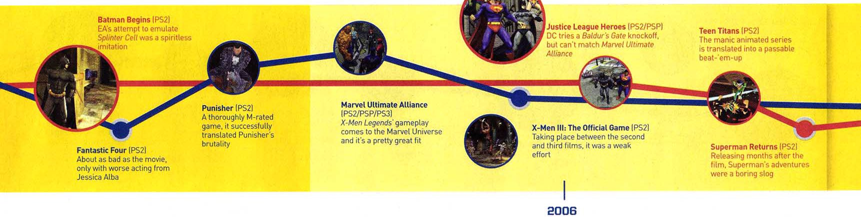
Fistheart the Explodinator was a mild-mannered, largely anonymous editor for a medium-sized videogame magazine before his tragic transformation.

Born of rage at having to wait 34 minutes and 52 seconds for his videogame to install, after which he was made to wait another 34 minutes and 26 seconds for a separate, second installation, the Explodinator found his heart, once made of muscle and all gross stuff, *had metamorphosed into a fist poised to punch humanity in its neck.* And it was then the editor died and Fistheart was born.

His dreams of playing his videogame before bedtime shattered, Fistheart embarked on a course of evil, his ship chartered for crime, and the compass pointing due South toward villainy. His dictionary, he found, only had one entry in it: *Fistheart.* And its definition read: *Synonymous with evil.*

Fueled by furiousness, Fistheart now spends his time dreaming of doomsday devices and plotting everyone's grisly demise.

Editor's note: Because DCUO is an MMO, we are holding our review until we've had enough time to experience the full game with the community of players. Our review will run next issue.



Batman Begins (PS2)
EA's attempt to emulate *Splinter Cell* was a spiritless imitation

Fantastic Four (PS2)
About as bad as the movie, only with worse acting from Jessica Alba

Punisher (PS2)
A thoroughly M-rated game, it successfully translated Punisher's brutality

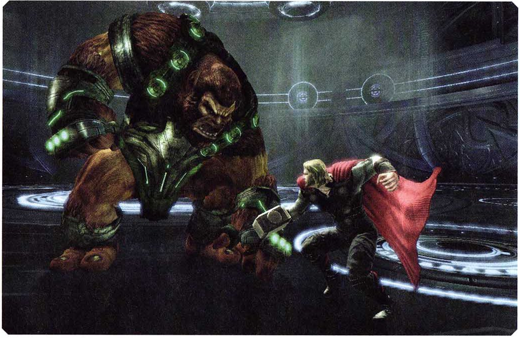
Marvel Ultimate Alliance (PS2/PSP/PS3)
X-Men Legends' gameplay comes to the Marvel Universe and it's a pretty great fit

Justice League Heroes (PS2/PSP)
DC tries a *Baldur's Gate* knockoff, but can't match *Marvel Ultimate Alliance*

X-Men III: The Official Game (PS2)
Taking place between the second and third films, it was a weak effort

Teen Titans (PS2)
The manic animated series is translated into a passable beat-'em-up

Superman Returns (PS2)
Releasing months after the film, Superman's adventures were a boring slog



Pub **Sega** Dev **Sega** ETA **April**

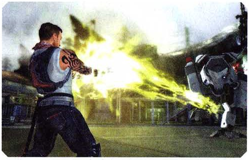
Thor God of Thunder

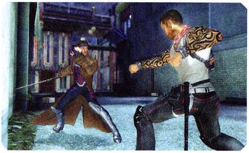
To casual fans of the Marvel comic book hero Thor, it never made any sense why he would be matched up against run-of-the-mill superheroes. He's a god after all, who carries a hammer capable of leveling mountains and controls the very elements of thunder and lightning. But Thor as we see him in the upcoming movie directed by Kenneth Branagh and the upcoming videogame *Thor: God of Thunder* is a bit more down to earth. Or at least he is when he comes to visit from his alien world of Asgard.

Thor still has upgradeable god powers at his disposal, like the aforementioned thunder and lighting, along with powerful control over the wind, which he'll use to great effect along with his potent hammer to defeat the evil forces unleashed—somewhat accidentally—by his brother, the trickster Loki. Both Thor and Loki are voiced by the actors who portray them in the movie, Chris Hemsworth and Tom Hiddleston, respectively.

A third-person brawler at heart, *Thunder* takes gamers on an adventure across a larger expanse of the Thor universe than will be seen in theaters, following a story co-written by Matt Fraction, the scribe behind the comic. Enemies are massive and challenging, giving players a bit more meat than found in the typical hack-and-smasher. Upgrading Thor's god powers and collecting runes and other items add a healthy dose of exploration to the gameplay as well.

Cooperation among Sega, Marvel, and the filmmakers should ensure a certain thematic cohesion between the properties, but don't expect to just play the movie. This is an entirely new adventure for the tow-headed deity that should give fans of the comic an adventure worthy of the universe they know and love.

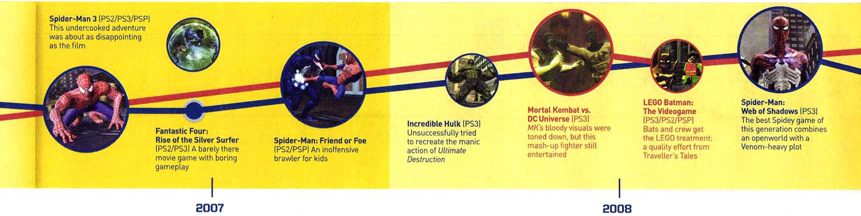




Pub **Activision** Dev **Silicon Knights**
ETA **TBD 2011**

X-Men Destiny

Professor X is dead and the human/mutant conflict is more intense than ever as *X-Men Destiny*'s story opens in a divided San Francisco. The future looks bleak when we meet our in-game avatar at a peace rally. Players will choose from three onlookers in the crowd and it will be around this choice—and all following choices, big and small—that *X-Men Destiny* is built. "Decision moments" are littered throughout the game and will allow us to pick our own powers, form alliances (or betray them), and determine our destiny, including whether we side with the X-Men and fight for peace, or with Magneto's Brotherhood and the mutant uprising. Familiar faces will be seen throughout the game—Magneto, Cyclops, and Wolverine, to name a few—but our unknown newcomer is the focus of this action-RPG.



Spider-Man 3 (PS2/PS3/PSP) This undercooked adventure was about as disappointing as the film

Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer (PS2/PS3) A barely there movie game with boring gameplay

Spider-Man: Friend or Foe (PS2/PSP) An inoffensive brawler for kids

Incredible Hulk (PS3) Unsuccessfully tried to recreate the manic action of *Ultimate Destruction*

Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe (PS3) *MK*'s bloody visuals were toned down, but this mash-up fighter still entertained

LEGO Batman: The Videogame (PS3/PS2/PSP) Bats and crew get the LEGO treatment; a quality effort from Traveller's Tales

Spider-Man: Web of Shadows (PS3) The best Spidey game of this generation combines an openworld with a Venom-heavy plot

Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive Ent.** Dev **Double Helix** ETA **June**

Green Lantern
Rise of the Manhunters

After years of Batman and Superman hogging the silver screen, the Green Lantern is finally getting a chance to shine in a blockbuster of his own this summer. Accompanying the film is a game based in the same universe, *Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters*. The game also features the original Green Lantern Hal Jordan, as played by Ryan Reynolds, and follows the intergalactic, ring-wielding police force when they battle the robotic scourge of the Manhunters.

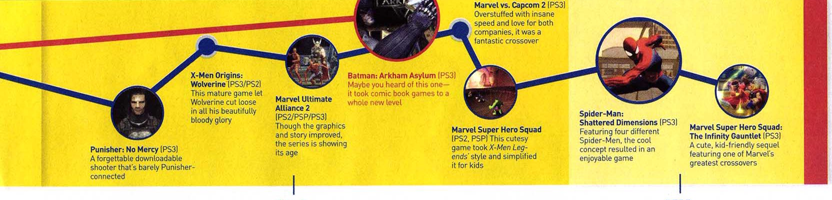
The combat system aims to take advantage of Green Lantern's powers, which seems like a tall order given these heroes blast green energy from their rings to create anything they can think of. The Lanterns in the game will be primarily focused on creating objects that smash the crap out of robots, so it's more than likely we'll see classic Lantern constructs like Hal's giant green fist.

Just as the film takes inspiration from comic stories, the game will also have characters and places familiar to DC Comics' more avid readers. The Manhunters themselves are classic villains, the original space protectors before they went genocidal, and the devs are working with legendary DC scribe Marv Wolfman to include even more lore. Taking a cue from the comics, Hal is supported by some of his pals, like gruff Lantern drill instructor Kilowog, and the cooperative mode has Hal working with friend, fellow Lantern, and future arch nemesis Sinestro. With a film and his first solo game, 2011 looks to be the biggest year ever for the ring-slinger.

Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive Ent.**
Dev **Rocksteady Studios** ETA **Fall**

Batman:
Arkham City

Developer Rocksteady let the inmates out of the asylum. *Batman: Arkham City* picks up where the excellent third-person adventure *Batman: Arkham Asylum* left off: with the looney bin no longer able to hold its inmates after the havoc wreaked by The Joker and assorted other asylum mainstays. New Gotham City mayor Quincy Sharp has annexed part of Batman's home turf to hold the psychotic rabble. More area equals more problems for Batman, but new gear and new abilities for his existing gadgets should give him a wing up over bad guys such as Two-Face, Mr. Freeze, and of course, the Joker. Fans should enjoy Batman's new maneuverability and the expanded abilities of the Detective mode to solve crimes, but the heretofore unrevealed multiplayer mode is what really has gamers more excited than Catwoman in a sandbox.



Punisher: No Mercy (PS3)
A forgettable downloadable shooter that's barely Punisher-connected

X-Men Origins: Wolverine (PS3/PS2)
This mature game let Wolverine cut loose in all his beautifully bloody glory

Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2 (PS2/PSP/PS3)
Though the graphics and story improved, the series is showing its age

Batman: Arkham Asylum (PS3)
Maybe you heard of this one—it took comic book games to a whole new level

Marvel vs. Capcom 2 (PS3)
Overstuffed with insane speed and love for both companies, it was a fantastic crossover

Marvel Super Hero Squad (PS2, PSP) This cutesy game took *X-Men Legends'* style and simplified it for kids

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions (PS3)
Featuring four different Spider-Men, the cool concept resulted in an enjoyable game

Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet (PS3)
A cute, kid-friendly sequel featuring one of Marvel's greatest crossovers

They're Crafty

Meet four gamers who are making artistic statements with their favorite hobby

By Tony Barrett

The Crocheter

Spins a pleasant yarn

Doilies, quilts, and scarves—that's what the typical gamer thinks about if he thinks about crochet at all. But Nikki Olida, 27, who learned to stitch from her mother, began to see something a bit more animated.

"My first creation was a gray Totoro from *My Neighbor Totoro*," she remembers. "I had fallen in love with the characters and I just had to make my own." She's since made several anime- and game-based designs.

Surprisingly, her love for games didn't come until very recently. Introduced by a friend to *Final Fantasy X*, she became enamored with the story and design and moved on to games such as *BioShock* and *Indigo Prophecy*. It wasn't until she saw a commercial featuring Sackboy that her big push into doll making began.

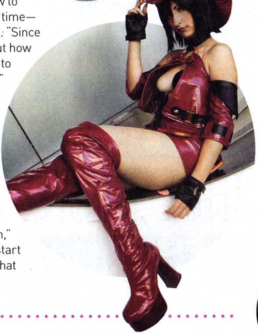
LittleBigPlanet's ever-popular star found life in Olida's hands, and she posted the results online. Fans of her work on YouTube requested a tutorial on how to make one, and she obliged. Interest skyrocketed and suddenly she was making requested Sackboys based on *Death Note*, *Ico*, *Assassin's Creed*, and *God of War*. To see more of Olida's work, check out her website, **pigcorner.com**.

The Cosplayer

Fictitious fashion

It all started with a friend inviting Heather Dugger to an anime convention. "I had no idea that people dressed up at these events, but figured it was common if they did it at *Star Trek* conventions."

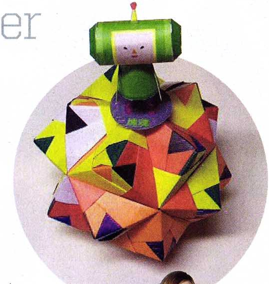
Her first few costumes were made with the help of her mother, but Heather's demand soon outstripped her mother's ability. The 27-year-old taught herself to sew by watching her mother's technique, but instead of using tutorials on how to cosplay—which weren't widely available at the time—she used her artistic talent to make her outfits. "Since I'm an artist and like to draw, I would sketch out how costumes should flow. From there, I would try to find patterns that were similar and alter them."



I-No, from *Guilty Gear*, was one design that couldn't be made through a simple pattern alteration. Birthed from a common love of the *Guilty Gear* fighting game franchise, and a stock of vinyl material purchased from a clearance rack at a craft store, the costuming plans began. It was one of her most difficult and challenging designs, not only for the concept but also because of the scarcity of the materials. "I only had so much to work with," she says, "and if I messed up once I'd have to start all over again. Only I couldn't buy any more of that specific vinyl."

Papercrafter

She knows when to hold and when to fold

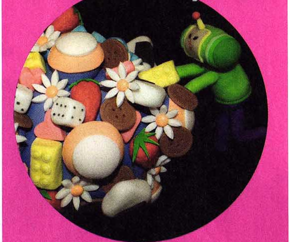


It's the ultimate blank canvas: a simple piece of paper. But in the right hands it can become the Prince of All Cosmos. That's the challenge that Jennifer Park, 26, embraces with her papercraft.

"I do papercraft because it's unique and accessible," Park says. "Sometimes at restaurants I'll leave a tip sitting on top of a lotus or crane that I've folded from a napkin. It's satisfying to take humble paper and transform it into a work of art."

Perhaps her most intriguing, and difficult, piece was a work based on the Namco game *Katamari Damacy*. This detailed paper sculpture features the tiny Prince of All Cosmos pushing his trademark Katamari; the ball is an origami project while the Prince is a printed pattern that's cut and folded. The two major methods of papercraft find themselves represented in this piece, which proves a nice touch.

"I'm drawn to quirky things," Park says. "Games are art and fantasy, and I like bringing other people's dreams to life. There isn't always merchandise available, so I make my own."



The Cake Decorator

A fondant tribute

Armed with baking experience and basic cake-baking supplies, Jacqui Keskinen, 26, had a mission: to break out of the pan-shaped box and make distinctive cakes. Even though her cake-decorating portfolio spans from the traditional to the nerdy, a self-inspired tribute to *We Love Katamari* stands out as a special challenge.

"I had some concerns for a sphere cake," Keskinen says. "I didn't want it to be flat at all, but gravity and the weight of fondant [a modeling clay-like sugar paste] were constantly working against me." To avoid this, the ball's features would have to be made in advance and attached in the final assembly.

Attention to detail is evident, with thought given to what would actually make sense on a Katamari ball. Given the relative size of the ball to the Prince of All Cosmos, props had to be equally proportionate: "I couldn't just throw a snowman on, because while the ball gets bigger he always stays the same size." Days before baking, the props for the Katamari—buttons, dice, LEGO bricks, and the Prince himself—were built of fondant.

Construction began with two half-sphere cakes being baked. "If you were to cut open a Katamari ball, what would it look like inside?" Keskinen asked, showing off the earthy and un-cake-like green and purple swirl in the center of the globe. "They probably all look different, but this is mine." More of Keskinen's cakes can be found at **cmykakes.com**.

10 GREAT FORGOTTEN PS3 GAMES

They may have slipped from memory or been lost in the shuffle, but these diamonds in the rough demand unearthing

1 OPERATION FLASHPOINT: DRAGON RISING

It may be a modern military first-person shooter, but *Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising* couldn't be any more different from *Call of Duty*. This is a hardcore tactical simulation, where death can sneak up on us before we even have time to react. We have to work closely with our squad and, if we're playing online, communicate constantly. Massive levels and a variety of vehicles and classes keep things interesting too.

2

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK

Riddick's PlayStation 3 debut was released to no real fanfare despite offering two entire games: an HD remake of Xbox's *The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay* and a new adventure, *The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena*. These games were dark and dingy triumphs of design and provided players with frantic action, great stories, and a tremendous protagonist.

3

X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE

Everyone's favorite berserker at his violent best proved to be an entertaining romp for PS3, and *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* defied all expectations as a great movie-to-game translation. Pouncing on enemies from afar and tearing them to shreds with our claws felt hugely satisfying, and there were a lot of comically gruesome set-pieces, like sticking a man's head into a helicopter's rotors.

BLADES OF GLORY
As Wolverine takes damage his skin peels away to reveal his adamantium skeleton underneath.

5

SINGULARITY

Thanks to a few unfortunate delays and the fact that it bore more than a passing resemblance to the far superior *BioShock*, *Singularity* hit store shelves with almost no momentum. As a result, most of us missed out on its tremendously clever time-manipulation mechanics, which let players guide bullets, weaponize the environment, and even age enemies into oblivion. That, combined with a few neat set-pieces and an interesting Cold War-conspiracy storyline, earns this one a second look.

4

IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

The screenshots might make this look like the world's most lifeless flight simulation, the kind of thing found on the PC of a man with taped-together glasses. But it's not. It's the *Call Of Duty* of flying games: gorgeous, action-packed, and fast-paced. Despite the small team, it has visuals that shame big-budget games like Ubisoft's *H.A.W.X.*, and there's even an arcade mode to balance out the sim elements.

SAW THROAT
The sadistic Darklings were voiced by Mike Patton from Faith No More.

6

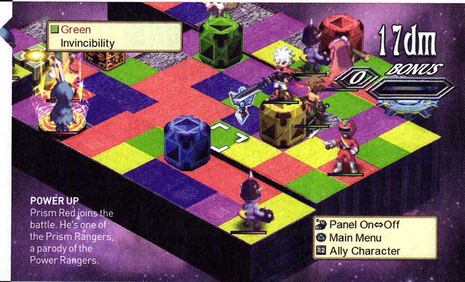
THE DARKNESS

Jackie Estacado is a New York mafioso with a dark secret: He's possessed by an ancient, parasitic demon that feeds on shadow. Under the cloak of night, Jackie can call upon his evil passenger to fuel deadly supernatural powers, which he uses to get revenge on his treacherous mob-boss uncle. Execution here is often clumsy, but using tentacles to fling cars and people around and summoning up Darkling helpers is a real thrill, giving the otherwise plain combat an edge over similar games.

7

DISGAEA 3: AOJ

Disgaea 3: Absence of Justice is one of the most staggeringly feature-packed RPGs ever made, and the monstrously deep combat is supported by hours of story and side content. The SNES-style graphics and distinctly Japanese sense of humor won't suit everyone's tastes, but get past them and *Justice* proves surprisingly funny, well-written, and engrossing. Just be sure to set aside 200 hours of spare time to play it.

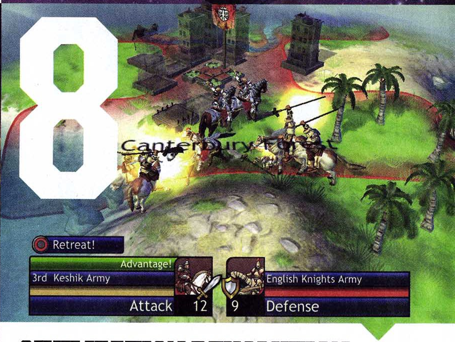


POWER UP
Prism Red joins the battle. He's one of the Prism Rangers, a parody of the Power Rangers.

9

THE CLUB

Was it poor advertising? Lack of interest? A crowded release window? Whatever the case, people really missed out on *The Club*, a game that provides an arcadey twist on the third-person shooter. Points are awarded for chaining stylish kills. It's all about racking up a massive score. Think *Tony Hawk*, but with headshots.



8

CIVILIZATION REVOLUTION

Civilization is the epitome of the "just one more turn" game. The turn-based strategy title sees us leading a society from humble tribal beginnings to the role of a modern superpower. Players can win by conquest, diplomacy, or technological advances, and there are a thousand ways to reach each goal. But rather than just port the PC version, 2K Games designed *Revolution* specifically for gamepads, meaning it's streamlined and easy to play.

10

BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY

Gearbox's *Brothers In Arms* series never made it big despite generating enough sales to warrant two sequels. *Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway* was the first in the series on PS3, and it's one of the console's most satisfying tactical shooters. From rainy French villages to the verdant fields of the Dutch countryside, levels are full of detail, atmosphere, and opportunities to outsmart the Nazis using a powerful squad command system. The story isn't spectacular, but the cerebral action and authenticity make up for it. This is an essential purchase.

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PlayStation The Official Magazine®

Issue 039 December 2010

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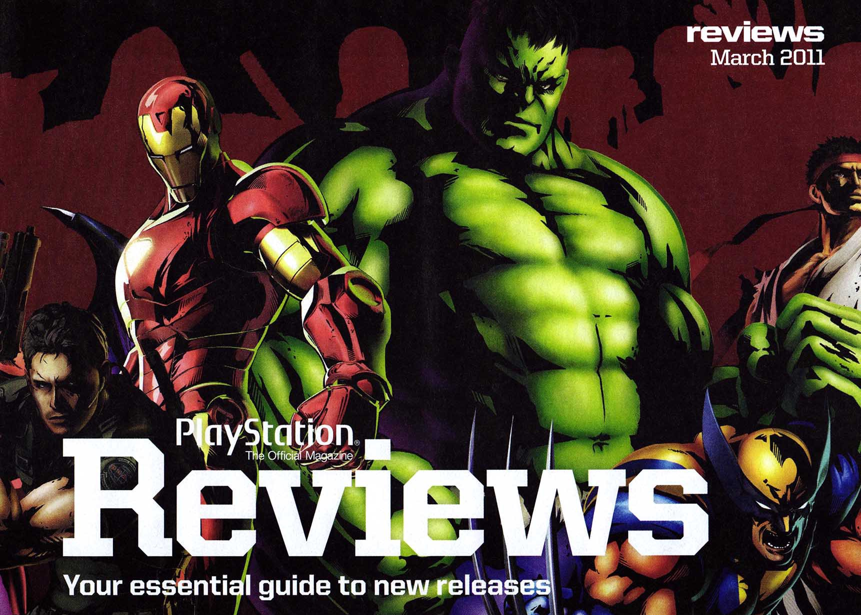


PlayStation®
The Official Magazine

Reviews

Your essential guide to new releases

We're living in the age of the sequel.

Take a gander at this month's review titles. From the brawling grandeur of Capcom's clash of universes to Atari's revival of a classic driving series, to the fantastical revival of a playful penguin, the review pages of PTOM's critique section has become a repository for follow-ups.

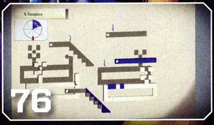
It's good to revisit old friends, of course, and we'd be hard pressed to criticize game companies for wanting to work with established products in an uncertain market. And, certainly, we'll cheer when some of the sequels thrill us even more than their predecessors do.

Yet we can't help celebrate when someone—anyone—stabs at originality. Developer Double Fine made us laugh with the offbeat Halloween adventure *Costume Quest*, and we see more greatness from their Russian nesting doll (we are not making this up) adventure *Stacking*. And *Venetica*, which offers a mystery and Death's daughter as the protagonist (again, we're not making this up) brings the promise (if not the delivery) of an intriguing jaunt through medieval times.

There's plenty of room on the reviews pages. Everything, be it reworked or brand new, is welcome.

MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 3

Face front, true believer, as the mighty Marvel universe clashes with the cacophanous Capcom characters in an all-out brawl. Excelsior!



ECHOCHROME II

Decidedly offbeat, *echochrome* returns for another round of what the hell is going on? Ensuring a little man's safety has never been this, uh, weird.

TWO WORLDS II

Return to *Two Worlds*, which, undoubtedly, is a better bargain than one world. See, because it's one more world. One must ever strive to be cost-conscious in these trying times.

How we score our reviews...

10 Awesome
Instant classic that's nearly PlayStation perfection.

9 Excellent
Highly recommended and a great investment.

8 Great
Wonderful yet still possessed of minor flaws.

7 Good
Enjoyable, but with definite room for improvement.

6 Acceptable
A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Mediocre
A game that's both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Flawed
Too flawed to be anything more than a curiosity.

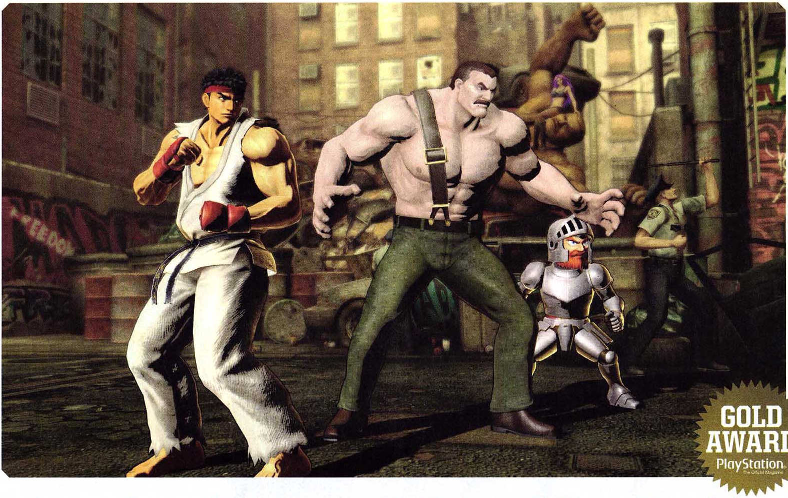
3 Poor
A seriously defective game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful
A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it like the plague.

1 Raw Sewage
Apparently, feces *can* be pressed on a disc.

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Our Highest Accolade
The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics, and profound appeal.



GOLD AWARD PlayStation The Official Magazine

Marvel vs. Capcom 3 Fate of Two Worlds

So this is what it's like when worlds collide

Fighting game intro sequences aren't supposed to give us goosebumps. Nobody's here for the story; we're in it for the *action*. Brooding, muscle-bound characters posing dramatically for a sweeping camera aren't supposed to trigger our "awesome" reflex. Yet there we were, watching Dante shoot the blade off Deadpool's sword as Morrigan and Iron Man soared past the window outside and Ryu slugged it out with Wolverine on the roof above, our eyes open wide and our jaws hanging agape. Never before had we been so excited to dive into a fighting game.

Fortunately, *Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds* doesn't disappoint on any level. Though perhaps not quite as chaotic and fast-paced as *Marvel vs. Capcom 2*, it still feels like the gaming equivalent of a sugar-rush: bright, flashy, accessible, and fun in every sense of the word. *MvC3* manages to artfully implement a much more well-rounded combat system while still retaining all the flavor and essential elements that made its predecessor such an outrageous experience. Seriously, how many other games would let us body slam a tiny knight in hilarious underpants with a girl piloting a cartoonish green mech?

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Capcom
Dev Capcom **Price** $59.99
ESRB Teen **It's like** that dream we have after eating candy and playing games all night.

Fan Fair

As the game's intro demonstrates, *MvC3* owes much of its appeal to its roster of iconic fighters, a collection culled from decades of well-loved games and comics. Marvel fanboys and devoted Capcom followers who can't resist the lure of seeing the Hulk and Chun-Li in a bare-knuckle free-for-all won't be disappointed—every aspect of the game feels like a loving, light-hearted celebration of the characters and their source material.

Baby Brawl

If *MvC3's* straightforward controls still aren't accessible enough, it also includes a Simple mode, which...well, simplifies the process even further. However, it also removes a lot of potential moves and techniques, so we don't recommend using it unless both players select this option.

From Deadpool moonwalking away from his opponents to Spider-Man's constant quips while in the ring, every character displays a huge amount of personality, complete with subtle details and references that any true fan will be overjoyed to hear. The fan service even extends to the characters' alternate costumes—like Iron Man's Silver Centurion armor and Spider-Man's symbiote suit—and context-sensitive banter. Hearing Wolverine and X-23 refer to each other by their real first names (Logan and Laura, of course) before a fight gave us chills.

Thankfully, none of this should alienate the uninitiated. Those who get the references will feel totally gratified and those who don't will never even notice they missed something. It's a difficult balance to strike and Capcom ▸▸

7 HITS!
0 LEVEL
LEVEL 2

Apparently, the game will monitor our online connection habits and match rage quitters with other rage quitters. Neat!

should be applauded for handling it so well.

Really the only thing fans could potentially complain about is the final character roster, which excludes fan favorites like Mega Man and Cable but includes a few baffling choices like Wolverine knock-off X-23 and long forgotten *Ghosts 'n Goblins* star Arthur. We certainly miss some of the classic *MvC2* characters that were omitted, but at the same time, we've learned to love the entire cast list, including those fighters we were originally most skeptical about.

Characters Welcome

Despite the fact that we could care less about X-23 as a character, she's actually a blast to use in the game. Her speed is practically unmatched and she possesses some of the most creative moves in the game, like an unblockable long distance grab that allowed us to punish turtling opponents. We've also become big supporters of *Resident Evil's* Albert Wesker. Though he could have easily been an overpowered nightmare, his moves never felt unfair and his combos are some the slickest we've ever seen. Seriously, teleporting in the middle of a combo? Awesome.

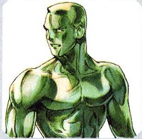
PHOENIX
RYU
94
POLICE
0 LEVEL
LEVEL 1

Block damage is fairly high so be careful not to turtle for too long.

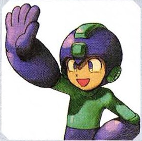
Older characters like ace mechanic Tron Bonne and the previously overpowered Sentinel have had new life breathed into them with useful new moves and options, while other returning fighters—like Wolverine, Ryu, and Iron Man—feel largely the same. Which is great. Don't fix what ain't broken, right? All in all, the roster feels incredibly robust, creative, and diverse, layered with the same kind of nuance that made *Street Fighter IV* such a rich experience.

It is, however, significantly smaller, down to 36 characters (38 with DLC) from *MvC2's* staggering 56. But this too is a good thing. *MvC2* may have been have been a brilliantly fun game, but it was also about as balanced as a child celebrity. Tournament players would consistently rely on the same six or so characters because the other 50 were

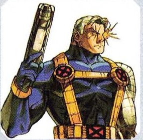
Five Characters We'd like to see return as DLC



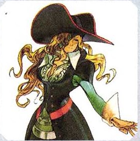
ICEMAN



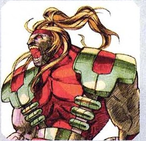
MEGA MAN



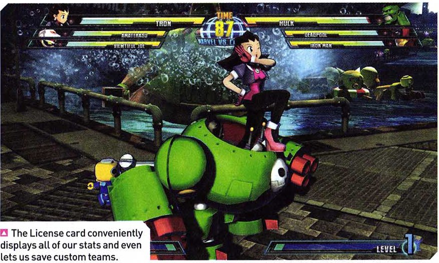
CABLE



RUBY HEART



OMEGA RED



The License card conveniently displays all of our stats and even lets us save custom teams.

MvC3's Missions mode can teach us the basics, but we wish there were other more comprehensive tutorials available.

C.VIPER
FELICIA
AMATERASU
DORMAMMU
STORM
THOR
2
LEVEL
LEVEL
1

essentially useless for serious play. Such is not the case in *MvC3*. Though it will take time for all the balance issues to be sussed out, we never encountered a character or tactic that we couldn't beat somehow.

Flying Fists

Not only have the game's balance issues been resolved, the fighting mechanics feel far more substantial—Capcom has clearly applied the lessons it learned from its *Street Fighter* reboot. True, the action is markedly slower than it was in *MvC2*, but this makes advanced techniques like cancels, dashes, and complex combos far more useable. *MvC2* often felt so chaotic that it made as much sense to resort to buttonmashing as it did to the careful application of skills. Now hardcore players are much more likely to be rewarded for their well-honed abilities.

Despite the noticeable *SFIV* influence, *MvC3* retains all the elements that made the previous game so unique. For starters, it's still one of the most accessible fighting games ever created. The simplistic button scheme utilizes just three attack buttons of increasing strength and one "special" attack button that serves mainly as a launcher to initiate *MvC*'s signature air combos. This easy-to-grasp control scheme combined with the wildly over-the-top moves and visuals creates an instantly satisfying experience that lets all players look and feel powerful immediately.

And of course, players can still expect the three-on-three action to get totally nuts. Screen-filling super attacks, insane triple-digit combos, and lightning-fast cross-ups—this game's delightful sensory overload knows no bounds. Ally assists—which are now mapped to designated buttons, thankfully—also keep the action unpredictable while adding some serious strategy to the mix. Pulling a banged-up fighter from the ring to let him recover a little health can make all the difference in a close match, and chaining ally-assist attacks into combos is one of the most effective ways of catching an opponent off guard. See? Just like *MvC2*.

Fighting Words

Naturally, there have been a few changes to the formula as well, but none of them impact the experience too dramatically. For example, as a result of the game's slower pace, projectile attacks are more effective at controlling an opponents' movement, which is especially bad news for slower bruiser-type characters and characters without air dashes in their repertoire. However, selecting a well-balanced team and utilizing the new X-Factor system—which let's player supercharge their fighters and slowly recover health once per round—can easily rectify that problem.

Unfortunately, Capcom's servers were not up and running at the time of this review, so we can't vouch for the stability of online play. But given its track record with *SFIV*, we have faith that any issues will be marginal.

Online or off, *MvC3* is a blast. The lovably goofy presentation, the ADD-esque action, and the stunning visual style (which, by the way, looks jaw-droppingly fantastic in motion) provide an experience that could easily suck us in for a hundred hours or more. It won't have the immense impact that *SFIV* did and hardcore *MvC2* fans may be bitter about some of the changes, but in the end, the joy of watching our favorite characters beat the crap out of each other will always win out.

PlayStation The Official Magazine
9

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

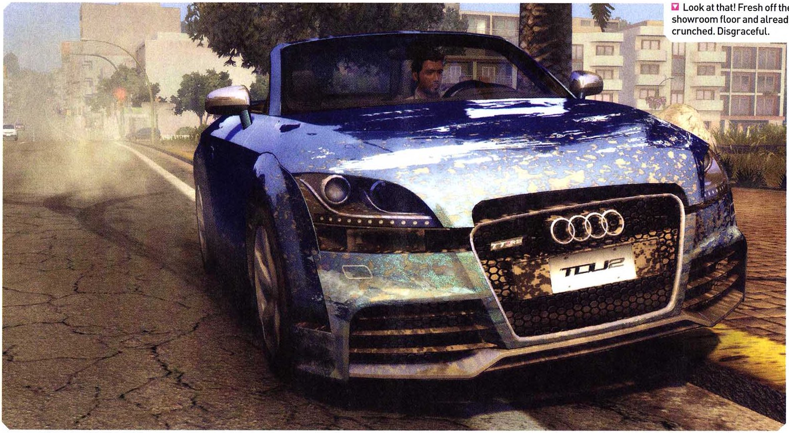
Cast List

MARVEL

Captain America
Deadpool
Doctor Doom
Dormammu
Hulk
Iron Man
Magneto
M.O.D.O.K.
Phoenix
Sentinel
She-Hulk
Shuma-Gorath (DLC)
Spider-Man
Storm
Super-Skrull
Taskmaster
Thor
Wolverine
X-23

CAPCOM

Akuma
Albert Wesker
Amaterasu
Arthur
C. Viper
Chris Redfield
Chun-Li
Dante
Felicia
Haggar
Hsien-Ko
Jill Valentine (DLC)
Morrigan
Ryu
Spencer
Trish
Tron Bonne
Viewtiful Joe
Zero



Look at that! Fresh off the showroom floor and already crunched. Disgraceful.

Test Drive Unlimited 2

Time for a tune-up

Info

Format PS3
Pub Atari
Dev Eden Games
Price $49.99
ESRB Teen
It's like wanting a Porsche but getting a Prius.

When the original *Test Drive Unlimited* arrived in 2006, it impressed with its seamless online integration and unique openworld racing. Four years later, the sequel faces stiff competition from games that have evolved the genre with more exciting races and streamlined multiplayer. Unfortunately, *Test Drive Unlimited 2's* free-form racing and social focus can't mask the mediocre racer underneath its hood.

After selecting a *Sims*-esque avatar, we quickly set out to explore the Spanish island of Ibiza at triple-digit speeds. Instead of racing on different set tracks, *Unlimited 2's* racing format had us driving from point A to point B and competing on public roads, a la *Grand Theft Auto's* racing missions. While cruising around in Free Drive mode, new locations, races, challenges, and most importantly, warp points are unlocked. Once an area has been visited, it's simple to warp back there at any point.

The car selection is pretty broad, including some American muscle classics, some Italian exotics, and plenty of mid-level sports cars. Cosmetic customization consists of stickers and paint jobs, and car tuning is limited to simple leveled upgrades. Graphically, the game is servicable: The cars look good, though there's noticeable background pop up as the game's draw distance isn't quite as far as it should be. *Unlimited 2* does have surprisingly good lighting though; sunrise and nighttime driving actually look better than daylight driving.

Long and Boring Road

While openworld racing is appealing, it's important that the actual roads be

Timeline Previous year models

1987

Test Drive
PC, 1987
Don't laugh, five stages and five cars was state-of-the-art back in the day!

1990

Test Drive III: The Passion
PC, 1990
The first *Test Drive* game to introduce openworld racing.

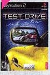
1999

Test Drive 6
PSone/Dreamcast, 1999
Forty-one upgradeable vehicles that could be purchased in any desired order.

2004

Test Drive: Eve of Destruction
PS2/Xbox, 2004
A departure for the series, *Destruction* offered demolition derby-style racing.

2006



Test Drive Unlimited
PS2/Xbox 360, 2006
Openworld racing with slick multiplayer, but the PS2 version was decontented.

Looking for a little driving excitement in *Unlimited 2*? Just venture off the asphalt a smidge and enjoy Ibiza's scenery while traveling sideways down the road.

Practicality versus styling: Who decides the victor? The wife, probably.

interesting. *Burnout: Paradise* did a nice job of making its Paradise City seem like an actual town while secretly making sure there were crazy turns and jumps nearly everywhere. *Unlimited 2* lacks that dynamic touch. A lot of the roads in Ibiza are simply straight slogs through the countryside. It just feels like commuting.

Unlimited 2's tarmac racing has its share of practical issues that often get in the way of the fun. Because courses are just checkpoints scattered around public roads, it can be hard to spot the actual turns. The game's inconsistent physics only add to the problem. Any time a car loses direct contact with the asphalt, it's likely to spin; we soon learned to stay on the tarmac at all times and not try anything risky. In what's clearly intended to be an arcade-minded racer, *Unlimited 2's* physics actively discouraged us from doing anything other than staying directly on road.

Car Club

Unlimited 2's online play is still integrated well, though it's less dazzling than it was back in 2006. Other players are indicated on the map and can be directly issued challenges or invited to participate in events. Players visible on the world map are only a small slice of the available online players, so befriending people in-game and joining guild-like clubs is essential. Participating in clubs also rewards the player with more experience points and exclusive cars.

Unlimited 2 holds some interesting online game modes, including Speedtrap, where players compete to own checkpoints by passing them at the highest speed they can muster. Follow the Leader also puts an interesting cooperative twist on the game, allowing only the leader to see where the next checkpoint is. Players must stay close to each other as the checkpoint only remains open for a short time after the leader has passed through it. Synchronized driving is a refreshing change of pace from the usual bumper car-style races, though we definitely fared better at this type of challenge when we had a dedicated crew of drivers working together.

Ultimately, *Unlimited 2* offers a serviceable, but bland, openworld driving experience. Where its predecessor made its name on the strength of its, at the time, revolutionary online multiplayer integration, this game is consistently outclassed by titles such as *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit* and *Blur*, and its static driving lacks the arcade thrills we've come to expect. Sadly, it just doesn't have the horsepower to pull away from its superior competitors. Consider this a case of poor advertising. It's at best a limited test drive.

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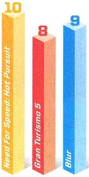
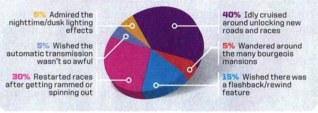
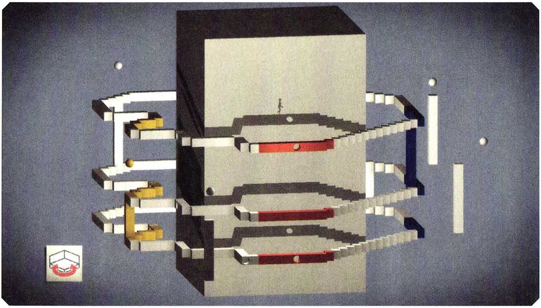
MICHAEL GRIMM

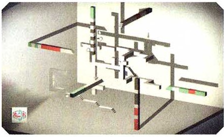


ScorePole
The hotly contested PS3 driving genre has no pole position for *Test Drive Unlimited 2.*

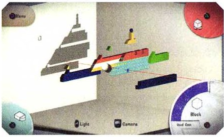
What we did in... Test Drive Unlimited 2







Warning: *echochrome ii's* shadowy shifts of perspective may cause brain sprains.



echochrome ii

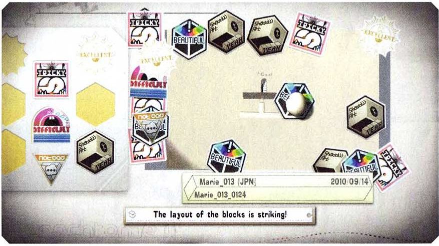
An illuminating puzzler

Direct Feed
Stage-solving savants can share their replays—with or without the PS Eye recording in the background—to YouTube directly from the game. Just promise to cover up, okay?

Between the perplexing perspective-based puzzles, minimalist interface and stark, monochromatic visuals, 2008's *echochrome* is truly unlike any other game. That holds true even now with the sequel, which artfully knocks aside its own established rules to embrace an all-new approach.

The results are fascinating, though admittedly less engaging in practice. Rather than rotating a viewpoint to create impossible, M.C. Escher-esque pathways for a wooden doll to traverse, *echochrome ii* casts the required PlayStation Move controller as a virtual flashlight, letting players shine a spotlight on a series of suspended blocks to manipulate elaborate shadow layouts. Since the mannequin can only walk upon shadows, players must use the light source to create combinations of platforms, stairs, and portals to guide him to the exit.

Unrestrained by the bounds of physical reality, *echochrome ii* creates its own laws to play by, such as the ability to create an exit doorway by aligning a circle and a rectangle or make jump pads by merging a circle shadow with that of any platform. Plus, the flashlight approach offers more novel effects, with hidden shadow images found in certain stages. Though the resulting experience is undeniably unique, some stages can be passed simply by finding the correct angles for the Move controller, robbing the experience of its intellectual punch and plunging it into bouts of monotony.



Marie_013 [JPN] 2010/09/14
Marie_013_0124

The layout of the blocks is striking!

PS3
echochrome ii

Info
Format PSN **Pub** SCEA
Dev SCE Japan Studio
Price $14.99 **ESRB** Everyone
It's like nothing you've ever played—not even the first game.

Luckily, *echochrome ii* overcomes its lack of excitement by offering variations on its core theme. Beyond the standard Escort mode, all 100 stages can be played in Echo or Paint: The former takes a cue from *echochrome*, stranding faded dolls on multiple shadow platforms and challenging the Move wielder to find ways to guide the main character to all of them; the latter tasks players with coloring a certain percentage of the suspended blocks by letting mannequins run wild over the shadows.

But where *echochrome ii* may find its longest legs is with a *LittleBigPlanet*-like level creation and sharing suite, which lets players the world over concoct their own twisted puzzles and easily pop them up on the PlayStation Network. New puzzles give players an ever-growing stream of new content without an additional fee. And while the sequel adds color and rendered images to the mix, it still maintains plenty of the simple, winning aesthetic of the original, again wrapped up in crisp classical tunes.

While less engrossing—and therefore less essential—than its predecessor, *echochrome ii* remains a smartly conceived puzzler that offers fresh and innovative ideas, especially when it comes to using the PlayStation Move.

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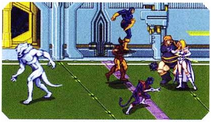
ANDREW HAYWARD

X-Men The Arcade Game

Format **PSN** Pub **Konami** Dev **Backbone Entertainment** Price **$9.99** ESRB **Everyone 10+**

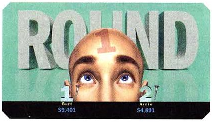


This arcade port lets up to six players take up arms as their favorite spandex-clad mutant heroes and smash through a deluge of angry droids, lizard men, and badly voiced supervillians. Punching, jump kicking, and using mutant powers to violently dismantle droves of dim-witted foes grows repetitive almost immediately. It also doesn't take very long to tear through the game's short levels, particularly when relying on the screen-clearing powers unique to Wolverine, Storm, Colossus, and other playable X-folks. Death comes frequently, but infinite continues completely erase the once-brutal challenge of the original arcade coin-op. **NATHAN MEUNIER**

PlayStation 5

You Don't Know Jack

Format **PS3** Pub **THQ** Dev **Jellyvision** Price **$39.99** ESRB **Teen**

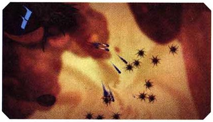


Party games don't garner much respect from hardcore gamers, but *You Don't Know Jack* deserves an exception. Snappy production, entertaining dialogue, and genuinely mind-bending trivia questions kept us engaged. Since scores are time-based, the game's recitation of long-winded answer options seemed pointless, but its rapid-fire pace kept us challenged. The best part? Success requires associating divergent bits and types of information, so consistently dominating the competition is difficult—even for a fountain of useless knowledge. Couple in 73 episodes of content at a bargain price, and it's hard not to invite *Jack* to our party. **ROGER BURCHILL**

PlayStation 9

MicroBot

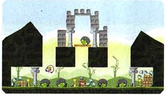
Format **PSN** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **Naked Sky** Price **$9.99** ESRB **Everyone**



Sloshing around a human being's innards amid blood vessels, bone structures, and pulsing organic matter is an unusual setting for battle, but that's precisely where *MicroBot's* microscopic war between robots and bacterial infection takes place. This exploration-heavy dual-stick shooter features intriguing internal environments to motor through while zapping infectious diseases and swarms of unfriendly robotic drones. Though some patches drag on for too long, numerous unlockable upgrades and ample customization options for the titular robotic protagonist offer compelling reasons to keep blasting through this fantastic voyage. **NATHAN MEUNIER**

PlayStation 7

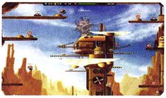
Minis Roundup



Angry Birds

Price **$3.99**
ESRB **Everyone**

Hurling ticked off avians via a massive slingshot in an attempt to destroy heavily fortified pig creature structures is a maddeningly addictive pastime. Though the PSP Mini version of *Angry Birds* doesn't have as many levels as some other iterations, it's still a chirping good time. **BUY**

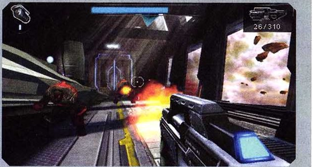


Blimp The Flying Adventures

Price **$4.99**
ESRB **Everyone**

Ferrying clients to docking bays scattered around stages is a dangerous affair in *Blimp*. All the cargo hauling while hunting for items proves engrossing; throw in bombing runs, enemy ships, and perilous obstacles, and it's party time. **BUY**

Mini of the Month



N.O.V.A

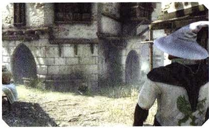
Price $4.99 **ESRB** Teen

Inspired by the Halo franchise, the sci-fi first-person shooter action in *N.O.V.A.* may not be the most original game to hit the PSP Mini lineup, but it's a battle-heavy romp through alien-infested territory. A mix of blasters, automatic weapons, and explosives offer some variety for dealing out a massive helping of death to robots and alien scum across 13 stages. **BUY**

▼ Pointless stick measuring among adventurers can only lead to self-esteem issues.

▲ Mayor Brown welcomes one and all to Brownsville, where no one is ever blue.

▲ This is *Two Worlds II's* version of the wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*.



Two Worlds II

Welcome to a better world

Sullied in reputation by its universally panned, poorly ported predecessor, *Two Worlds II* understandably arrives with its share of attached stigma. So it will surprise everyone who slogged through the original to discover the sequel smashes all preconceptions like a spiked mace through a skeleton warrior's ribcage. On the wings of a new engine, refined play mechanics, and some tweaks that even evolve one of gaming's most beloved genres, *Worlds II* flies in the face of naysayer's expectations, offering a do-over for the fledgling franchise rather than a me-too follow-up.

Thankfully, players don't need any prior knowledge of the Xbox-exclusive *Two Worlds* to enjoy its far superior sequel. The story picks up five years later, but those who've hacked, slashed, and magic-casted their way through any number of fantasy role-playing games will feel right at home in this consumed-by-evil world. There's the requisite dark lord who'd prefer we didn't have a pulse, ancient treasures to unearth, minions and towering monsters to slay, non-player characters to chat up and, of course, plenty of leveling and looting to be done. While it doesn't reinvent the genre, it deftly handles most of these core concepts and mechanics.

One of *Two World II's* more impressive feats is how it handles character customization and progression. Aside from shaping a hero with multiple sliders, players will do little to determine the class or preferences from the outset—while the protagonist may sport the wackiest hairstyle in all the land, he's pretty much the same dude everyone else starts with. However, with progress comes experience, and soon enough the player can plug points into skills and abilities that'd make any mage, warrior, or archer envious. What separates the system, though, is the option to have any of these diverse death-dealers just a D-pad click away: a trio of entirely different weapon sets can be mapped, allowing heroes to essentially switch classes on the fly. So when facing a pack of snarling Werbeast in the distance, the hero can don his wizard robes and magic-spitting staff to thin the threat from afar, then click over to the armor-and-broadsword set once he gets close enough to finish the job.

Complementing the ability to unleash three different brands of whup-ass on command are equally engaging magic and weapon-building systems. The former lets players combine spell cards—an ice card coupled with an area-of-effect card, for example, equals a screen full of frozen foes—while the latter lets players break down useless loot and mine it for valuable raw materials. Both work intuitively and add inventiveness and depth to staple concepts the devs could just have easily cribbed from the classic RPG handbook.

Despite the surprisingly solid gameplay, not all is perfect: Animations are stiff, close combat can feel clunky, and the voice-acting's more miss than hit. That said, there's enough quality content, including a detail-drenched presentation buoyed by top-notch physics, and a roughly 30-hour-plus quest to keep armchair adventurers busy until *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* arrives. **MATT CABRAL**

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Info

Format PS3 **Pub** SouthPeak
Dev TopWare Interactive
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Mature
It's like an unexpectedly enjoyable trip down a well-traveled road.

Cast List

THE VILLIAN

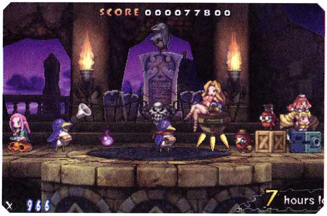
Sordahon
The dark wizard Gandohar's smiting right hand, he is pure evil

THE FRIEND

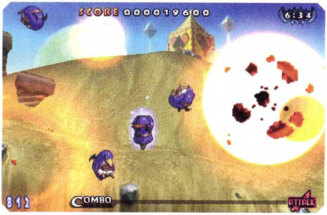
Rogdor
Leader of the Orcs, he aids the hero by helping him escape from a castle.

THE MYSTERY

Dar Pha
A half-orc assassin with a mysterious past—is she a friend or foe?



This is the feel-good demonic-penguin-hunting-for-panties-dood game for any year. Also, it is interesting to note these penguins explode.



Prinny 2
Dawn of Operation Panties, Dood!

Hellish torment handily portable

Info

Format PSP **Pub** NIS America
Dev Nippon Ichi Software
Price $29.99 **ESRB** Teen
It's like *Disgaea* meets *Ghouls 'n Ghosts*-lite.

Consider *Prinny 2: Dawn of Operation Panties, Dood!* an interesting conversation starter. Someone on the bus or train leans over and says, "Hey, so what's that game about?" "Well, there's this bunch of exploding demon penguins, and they're on a quest to steal back a pair of stolen panties..."

Maybe not something one would want to discuss in public? Regardless, it makes for good laughs, and that's the reason to play this game. It may not be a top-notch example of sidescroller design, but it sure has personality—and personality goes a long way.

Those who didn't like the way the first *Prinny* controlled will likely find similar complaints with the sequel. The jump mechanics still don't give enough of a handle on the character when he's in the air, and that's a mean wrinkle to throw in a game where the stages range in difficulty from "moderate" to "murderous." True, in the context of the *Disgaea* universe, Prinnies are supposed to have short and painful lives. Inflicting their punishment on the player, though, is a bit much.

On the other hand, there's plenty of snarky dialogue and sight gags to kill the pain after the horrible, flaming deaths, and *Dood!* gives the Prinnies more cool offensive moves to delay their near-inevitable doom. It's tough to stay angry at this game, even when it kicked us good and hard in the teeth. That might just be the neatest trick this Prinny squad's got. **DAVID F. SMITH**

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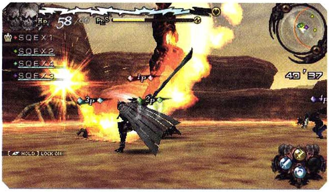

Lord of Arcana

Moogles or no moogles, Final Fantasy it ain't

To call *Lord of Arcana* a barefaced imitation could be unfair. *Monster Hunter* fans, though, may find it hauntingly familiar. Team up with four heroes, venture into the wide world, slaughter fantasy bad guys, use their bits to make new monster-killing gear... Ring a bell, anybody?

Originality, though, isn't *Arcana's* problem. That basic (albeit borrowed) concept is the best thing going for it, and it's occasionally addictive in spite of itself. The rest of the time, though, it's not all that much to look at and not much to play with.

Pacing is the key: how long it takes to do stuff and how hard it is to do it. *Arcana* tilts toward fairly drawn-out combat, especially during solo games. That'd be fine if players had more tactics at their disposal, but instead, battles boil down to repeating the same attacks for far too long, and boss fights go on for what feels like forever. The way the game handles experience and skill gains is pretty unforgiving, too—bow out of a quest partway, even without dying, and that trip to the dungeon didn't happen. All the effort was for nothing.

Some dungeon-hack games smartly disguise their monotony with unexpected art direction. *Monster Hunter* has its detailed primeval world, *Phantasy Star* its colorful sci-fi future. *Arcana,* save for a few inventive designs, looks like every other fantasy adventure that didn't go to the trouble, which is the root of its problems. **DAVID F. SMITH**

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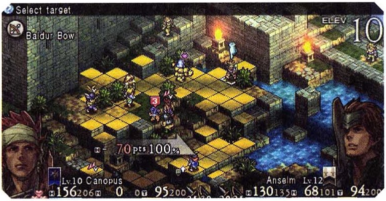
Info

Format PSP
Pub Square Enix
Dev Access Games
Price $39.99
ESRB Mature
It's like *Monster Hunter*—a lot like *Monster Hunter*.



IF XAPAN THINKS I'LL ABANDON MY SISTER, HE'S SORELY MISTAKEN.

ORDER
Concord King Unbloodied
The Leupha Coast
CAMPAIGN 324 DAY(S)
Day 9 of Firescale

Shadowbind
Elsebee Lv.11
138 183 44 84 25 200

Tactics Ogre
Let Us Cling Together

A new look for a forgotten classic

This is, more or less, the father of the contemporary strategy-role-playing game. There were similar games before it—games such as *Langrisser*, *Shining Force*, or its own predecessor *Ogre Battle*—but *Tactics Ogre* set down a style that proved to be definitive. Take a look at it and déjà vu strikes, because nearly every other turn-based battle game around looks a heck of a lot like this one.

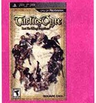
Keep in mind that most of them aren't quite so good. *Ogre* was a fine piece of work when it hit the states in 1998, even if it was overshadowed by a bigger name in *Final Fantasy Tactics*. This PSP remake, though, does just about everything better.

It helps to think of the common ways a game like this goes wrong. Some are too tedious, too slow, and too hard, grinding gameplay down into a repetitive slog. The battles in *Together* are neatly balanced to be just long and challenging enough. It isn't an easy struggle by any means, but beginners can survive long enough to learn the ropes and experts will remain engaged and have to stay on their toes.

Battle Hardened

Other SRPGs are too simple—there's not enough to do, not enough options to explore, not enough different ways to win a battle. That's absolutely not a problem here. *Together* does two things right where depth is concerned. For one, it has a vast array of items to craft, spells to learn, and unit classes to develop and train. For another, it

Info



Format PSP
Pub Square Enix
Dev Square Enix
Price $39.99
ESRB Teen
It's like most any fantasy strategy-RPG, but better.

Matsuno's Masterpieces 16 Years and the Quest Goes On

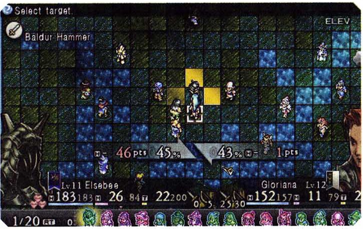
OGRE BATTLE
SNES, 1995 Quest's first big splash in America, a dense and complex 16-bit fantasy battle game.

TACTICS OGRE
PSone, 1998 Americans didn't play the Super Nintendo sequel until it was remade for the PlayStation.

FINAL FANTASY TACTICS
PSone, 1998 Created strategy-hacking maniacs all over the world.

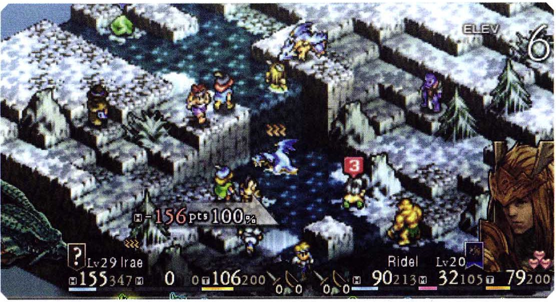
VAGRANT STORY
PSone, 2000 Perhaps Yasumi Matsuno's finest work, renowned for its cerebral combat and gripping story.

FINAL FANTASY XII
PS2, 2005 Matsuno hit the big time here, but a rocky development process led to long delays.



It might look complex—and to be fair, it is—but *Tactics Ogre* manages its difficulty curve with grace and charm. Let us cling together, indeed.

Sir Xaebos
DENAM OF GOLYAT!
YOU WILL ANSWER FOR GILDORA'S DEATH!



The goofy subtitle *Let Us Cling Together* is a running joke in action: every *Tactics Ogre* game contains a nod to a Queen song. This one is a cut from *A Night at the Opera*, featuring Freddy Mercury's mangled attempt to sing in Japanese.

doesn't dump all those pieces on the table at once. Slowly but surely, the game system evolves as it goes, and there's plenty of time for players to learn exactly how to fight with the many different weapons.

Wisely, though, nothing ever gets too complicated. One of the kinder new features for the PSP is a revamped experience system: instead of each unit gaining experience individually, character classes advance as a group. If one knight or archer was part of a battle, every knight or archer in the party gains a level. The old *Final Fantasy Tactics* system might still have its fans, people who enjoy having to micromanage their character development down to the tiniest detail. Most of us, though, will appreciate the way *Together* lets us spend more time on the fun stuff.

Nearly every other part of the game has received some kind of tweak to keep up with the times. The battlefields are three dimensional now, so there's no more trouble with units getting lost behind the terrain. A system called the Chariot Tarot lets players go back through earlier turns of a battle to try a different strategy, instead of just starting all over from scratch. And some battles have special extra victory conditions, with powerful new characters or hidden story elements as a reward.

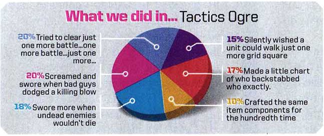
War Stories

The revised script has many new scenes and plot threads, but it still retains the same essential character of the original game and, like most of Yasumi Matsuno's creations, it's a bitter and cynical fable; a story about trying to do the right thing while the entire surrounding world is going wrong. It isn't going to warm any hearts on cold nights, but then good war stories rarely do.

A few bits and pieces could have stood some more work in the process of building the remake. Crafting new items takes longer than it should, thanks to some too-simple interface menus. Even if it made the system a bit more complicated, there needed to be options for crafting multiple items at once. As it is, building complex new weapons and armor involves a lot of doing the same thing over and over. A dozen different ingredients still have to be bought and crafted separately, one at a time.

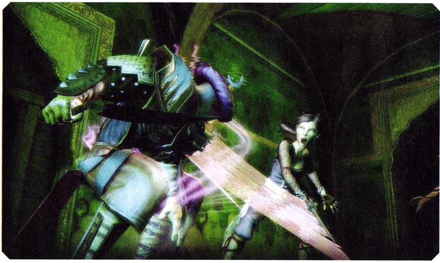
When we're reduced to complaining about minor details of the menu system, though, that probably counts as a backhanded compliment. Beyond the odd minor frustration, *Together* reveals why the people who made the game put their permanent stamp on the genre. It's a complex, challenging game with a powerful story that pulls us through it, and the portable version adds more than enough new elements to make it worth playing through again and again. **DAVID F. SMITH**

PlayStation The Official Magazine **9**



Venetica

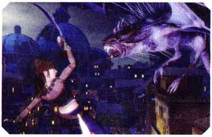
Death becomes her



Info

Format PS3
Pub DTP
Dev Deck13
Price $39.99
ESRB Teen
It's like eating the same sandwich for lunch everyday.

Following the age-old RPG formula, in *Venetica*, boy meets tragedy, boy gets powers, boy saves world. The only difference in this story is that boy is substituted for girl. We play as Scarlett, the daughter of Death, as she discovers she has magical abilities and is hurled into a mission to stop an evil necromancer from gaining universal power. Along the way she learns more about her mysterious gifts and is sent on innumerable "gather these items" and "kill this monster" side-quests. Apparently Death's daughter is not above running errands.



Venetica is an openworld action-RPG that plays like most other games of the genre. There's some leeway to customize weapons and armor and level up skills according to personal preference, but we're mostly forced to make selections on game-based necessities and requirements. There is little unique about the game—we've seen this equation time and time again. The only distinguishing factor is the five-year-old graphics that seem more suited to PS2 than PS3. Factor in frequent freezing issues and dialogue-tree selections that don't seem to correspond with the resulting actions and *Venetica* doesn't stand up to current-day RPG standards. ANNE LEWIS

▲ *Venetica* would be quite the looker... on PS2...'round closing time...after major alcohol consumption.

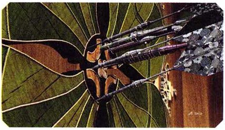
PlayStation **4**

Eat Them!

Format **PSN** Pub **SCEA** Dev **FluffyLogic**
Price **$9.99** ESRB **Teen**

Borrowing a page from Godzilla flicks and the arcade classic *Rampage*, *Eat Them!* puts us in the skins of town-terrorizing monsters. Behind the behemoths' whipping tails, mechanical arms, and crushing tentacles, we're required to complete tasks that usually involve tearing the city a new one. Turning multilevel structures into pavement pancakes, tossing buses like beer cans, and popping people into our maw is a blast. Unfortunately, repetitive objectives and frustrating difficulty spikes mean this monster meal is more junk food than solid nutrition. MATT CABRAL

PlayStation **7**

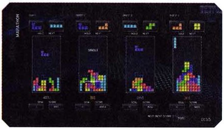


Top Darts

Format **PSN** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Devil's Details**
Price **$9.99** ESRB **Everyone**

While awaiting a lightsaber-wielding title to justify our Move purchase, *Top Darts* recreates the favorite pub pastime with an authenticity that had us craving pints of Guinness. Mimic the dart-tossing motions and the game does a surprisingly accurate job of accounting for speed and angles. Satisfying audio "thunks" and cool visual cues, like darts ricocheting off each other, up the immersion. The polished presentation compliments classic games such as 501, Around the Clock, and inventive party entries like the *Tetris*-like Stack Up. Online play isn't offered, but up to eight can compete locally. MATT CABRAL

PlayStation **8**



Tetris

Format **PSN** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **EA Mobile**
Price **$9.99** ESRB **Everyone**

It took a few years, but *Tetris* is finally available for PS3—reminding us why this puzzler remains an all-time classic. Frantically arranging blocks to clear lines in the Marathon mode is a tense, challenging experience, but *Tetris* offers a dozen other play variations on spinning the blocks. The six-player online modes are also an excellent addition, but we would've liked some pop in presentation beyond the 1080p visuals. Many features are carried over from the PSP Mini version, but this robust and affordable iteration is still an essential for puzzle lovers everywhere. ANDREW HAYWARD

PlayStation **8**

Stacking

Nesting made fun

It's a brilliant idea that, on its own, is more than enough to grab our attention: a puzzler starring babushka dolls as the characters *and* the gameplay mechanic. Not only do we get a charming world full of diminutive details—a twee landscape furnished with pushpins, popsicle sticks, and playing cards—but an equally endearing game with puzzles as intricately layered as the matryoshka dolls themselves.

It starts simply enough: Young Charlie Blackmore is the runt of his brood, a family that's fallen on tough times. His father, who left to earn a living to support his impoverished family, has gone missing, his siblings have been shanghaied, and Charlie—like any good hero—is determined to find and rescue them all.

Being a runt, Charlie can stack into the smallest of dolls, making his way up into larger and larger dolls. But it's not just about becoming the biggest on the block. With 100 different doll types—some unique, others part of the general populace—the real fun is in finding creative solutions using different combinations of nested dolls and their respective actions. Early puzzles are as straightforward as nesting into a big, blustery chap who can scatter others on command. But very soon, some of these puzzles involve a series of steps that'd make Rube Goldberg proud. One early example: Convincing some workers to move a piece of a stage set, then nesting into a series of cyclists to forcibly pedal into the set piece, creating an accident that flummoxes a nearby safety engineer, who will then shut down the show he's overseeing, freeing up a key character who will then join three others (once we solve *their* puzzles) in an attempt to convince the captain of a cruise ship to turn the boat around. Phew!

Adding to the addictive quality of the game: every puzzle has multiple solutions (with rewards for uncovering them all); each area has numerous hidden Hi-Jinks that involve all kinds of delightful acts like flatulating on fellow dolls or seducing several men at once; and the world is full of unique dolls to find and collect (accomplished by nesting into them, after which they're added to a trophy room). It's surprisingly addictive for a game that's as much an adventure as a puzzler. The only stumble is in the cutscenes—too frequent, too pokey, and too in love with its own kitschiness. Other than that, *Stacking* is a doll of a game. **GARY STEINMAN**

PlayStation The Official Magazine **8**

△ **Unleashing this doll's intestinal distress results in a noxious, crowd-clearing cloud.**

Info

Format PSN **Pub** THQ
Dev Double Fine **Price** $14.99
ESRB Everyone 10+ **It's like** no other puzzler we've played, actually.

DLC Roundup

SECRET CAVE

Costume Quest
Grubbins On Ice

Price **$4.99** ESRB **E 10+**

Venturing deep into Repugia, this new trick-or-treating adventure has our costumed heroes aiding monsters in a revolt against the dark and powerful Araxia. New costumes grant the awesome power of pirates, yetis, and floating eyeballs, with stamps and treats galore to gather.

ModNation Racers
Far East track pack

Price **$9.99** ESRB **E**

This high-speed expansion offers an extended race series and lots of new ways to customize cars and racers. Seven new tracks and additional objectives boost the career offerings, while unique unlockable items and props ramp-up the game's massive customization options.

Download of the Month

Battlefield: Bad Company 2
Vietnam

Price $14.99 **ESRB** Mature

If *COD: Black Ops'* multiplayer is starting to feel a bit too familiar by this point, *Battlefield* offers an alternative theater of multiplayer operation. Five new beautifully designed stages provide a great backdrop for frenetic firefights with tons of new weapons (including an awesome face-melting flamethrower).

Resident Evil Afterlife

After a painful life comes a painful afterlife

Info

Blu-ray 3D
MILLA JOVOVICH
RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE
3D
FULL HIGH DEFINITION 3D

Price $34.95; $39.95 (3D version)
Director Paul W.S. Anderson
Starring Milla Jovovich, Ali Larter, Boris Kodjoe
Rated R
Extras Deleted scenes, making-of shorts, picture-in-picture mode, commentary.

They keep making these movies and frankly, we have only ourselves to blame. After all, if people didn't go in droves to see the seemingly endless line of ever-worsening *Resident Evil* movies, Paul W.S. Anderson—whom we can only assume is Uwe Boll's secret apprentice of evil—wouldn't be working on the next one already.

In *Resident Evil: Afterlife*, Anderson has outdone himself. It's even worse than the last one, and that's actually an impressive, if dubious, feat. With a plot that seems outright allergic to logic, the latest adventures of supergirl Milla Jovovich takes enough from the games to make the trailer look positively hopeful. After all, there's a huge cloaked guy with a big honking ax, right? And the body count is off the charts, thanks to endless hordes of both zombies and bad guys. Also, it's in 3D, which means it potentially offers an extra dimension.

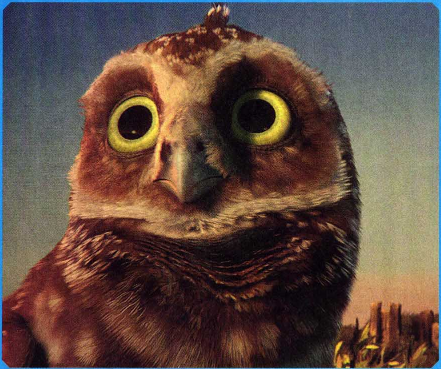
Taken as an intentionally bad Syfy Channel feature, *Afterlife* might be just the thing. The acting is amazingly awful—especially the guy playing Wesker, who easily pulls out the worst performance of 2010. While the action scenes have plenty of violence, most of the movie looks like as if it was directed by a rank amateur trying to copy *The Matrix*. That said, for those sporting new 3D-capable HDTVs, *Afterlife* might seem tempting.

Indeed, the movie is exactly what's expected from 3D—a lot of stuff flying to the TV's foreground. It's a quick tech demo to show off to friends, and the superb picture and sound quality combine with the 3D to extract an impressive visual display from cinematic garbage. Beyond that, there's picture-in-picture support for the behind-the-scenes material, deleted scenes, various featurettes, and more. So fans—a depressing notion—have a fair amount to peruse.

Resident Evil: Afterlife isn't a good movie in any sense of the word, but it is one of the first widely available (and not store- or brand-exclusive) 3D releases. As a brief way to show off the potential of the new tech, it's technically decent, though certainly nowhere near the best use of 3D out there. That's still not a recommendation to buy the movie, but we'll understand if early adopters can't help themselves.

PlayStation
The Official Magazine
4

JASON D'APRILE



Legend of the Guardians
The Owls of Ga'Hoole

Giving a hoot to a hoot

It's almost embarrassing to try to even describe *Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole.* A computer animated movie about young owls that must become warriors of legend? Yet, this "kiddie" owl tale is easily one the best fantasies from the past year. Part of its success comes from its director—Zach Snyder. Yes, the guy who did *300*, *Watchmen*, *Sucker Punch*, and soon, the new *Superman*, has done a kid movie and the results are spectacular.

As with all great kid movies, *Ga'Hoole* works on a number of levels, although it's not for the very young viewer thanks to battle sequences involving armored owls with nasty-looking bladed gauntlets mercilessly shredding each other. There's no story element adults haven't seen before either, yet the familiar themes of betrayal, friendship, and family are presented in a mature manner. That so much violence and drama is portrayed through the use of frequently adorable fluffy owls doesn't take much of the edge off either.

Snyder started off with solid source material, but went out of his way to make sure that it was worth translating the book series to film. *Ga'Hoole* was created in 3D, and for those searching for something worth donning the glasses for, this is it. In both 3D and 2D, this is a stunningly beautiful bit of cinema. The movie also uses the same animation techniques as *Happy Feet*, which make the owls look remarkably lifelike.

The extras are aimed toward youngsters with a series of shorts tying into the whole theme of owls, conservation, and the legends in the movie, along with a couple of mini-games. There's also a new *Looney Tunes* short to help hype the new series, which should be a boon for fans of the original books.

It would be easy to pass over *Ga'Hoole*, yet it's a striking fantasy adventure for viewers both young and old. JD

PlayStation The Official Magazine 8

Info

Price $35.99; $44.98 (3D version) **Director** Zach Snyder **Starring** Jim Sturgess, Hugo Weaving **Rated** PG **Extras** Minigames, picture gallery, owl stories, a Looney Tunes short.

Blu-ray Roundup

Merantau

Price $29.98 **Rated** R

The Indonesian *Merantau* is part *Ong Bok* and part *Slumdog Millionaire.* The story of a young farm boy getting into violent trouble in the big city is hardly a new concept. Yet, the boy Yuda is a surprisingly likeable hero and the script has a nice mix of depth and pure action, even if the overly dramatic ending comes out of left field. 7

Catfish

Price $39.98 **Rated** R

Catfish is a documentary bizarrely billed as a thriller. It's not. The movie is merely a questionable look at two people who fall deeply into the trap of Internet socializing. Mostly, *Catfish* proves that merely possessing a camera and a gullible friend don't make for a movie worth watching. 5

Buried

Price $29.95 **Rated** R

Ryan Reynolds' one-man show is a hell of a thriller. The actor manages to make his everyman charm work here while conveying the sheer horror of his burial. It's definitely not a feel-good movie, but *Buried* starts off intense and remains painfully effective right to the bitter end. 7

Top Gear
Series 14 and 15

Price $29.99 (each)
Rated Unrated

Part comedy, part car pr0n, *Top Gear* has been working magic in the United Kingdom for more than 15 years. Series 14 and 15 hit Blu-ray with great results and this is easily the best way to watch the show. 8

Want that

Lust-have stuff for PlayStation people

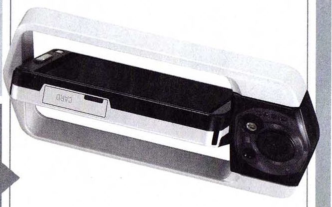
Urban Mix
TDK

TDK 3 Speaker Boombox

TDK's reinvention of the boombox runs off either AC power or 12(!) D batteries. The center speaker is a dedicated sub and it will slurp tunes directly from an iDevice, guitar, and more.

$499

tdk.com



Casio TRYX

Pull the frame out and grip the Tryx like a regular camcorder, fold it back as a kickstand to prop the camera upright, or even extend it lengthwise and hang it from a coat hook. With a 12.1MP CMOS sensor, 1080p and slow-mo video, Casio's latest is a breath of fresh air.

$250

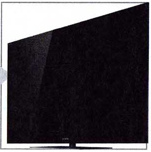
casio.com

Sony XBR-HX929

Sony's 3D-capable LCD TV uses individually controlled LEDs to give scenes both brightness and inky blacks. It's Skype compatible, has Internet connectivity, and can identify music using Gracenote.

Price TDB

sonystyle.com



Sennheiser CXC 700

These Sennheiser in-ear headphones use three modes of noise-destroying technology to keep sounds out. A handy TalkThrough function allows for conversations without removing the earphones.

Price: $320

sennheiser.com

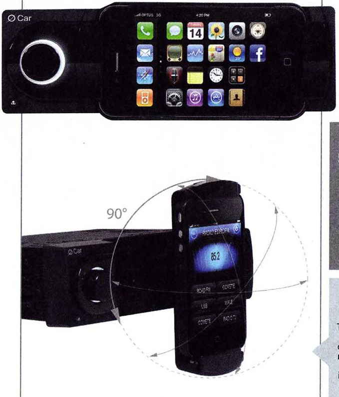
7'27"
PACE
2.96

Nike+ SportWatch GPS

Utilizing TomTom's global positioning system expertise, this timepiece records performance and displays results via a touchscreen interface. Connect with Nike+ online to track progress.

Price TBD

nike.com



Oxygen Audio O'Car

The iPhone *becomes* the stereo with the O'Car deck, controlling Internet radio, GPS navigation, hands-free calling, videos, and apps. The deck includes an FM/RDS radio and a built-in 4x55 watt amp.

$349

oxygenaudio.com

GUITAR WORLD LICK OF THE DAY

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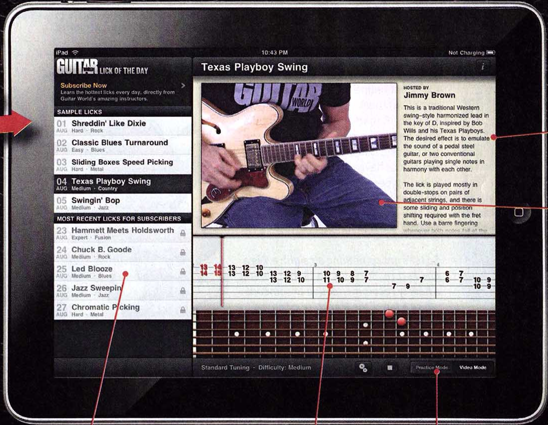
iPad 10:43 PM Not Charging

GUITAR WORLD LICK OF THE DAY

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- 02 AUG **Classic Blues Turnaround** Easy · Blues
- 03 AUG **Sliding Boxes Speed Picking** Hard · Metal
- 04 AUG **Texas Playboy Swing** Medium · Country
- 05 AUG **Swingin' Bop** Medium · Jazz

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- 24 AUG **Chuck B. Goode** Medium · Rock
- 25 AUG **Led Blooze** Medium · Blues
- 26 AUG **Jazz Sweepin** Medium · Jazz
- 27 AUG **Chromatic Picking** Hard · Metal

Texas Playboy Swing

HOSTED BY
Jimmy Brown

This is a traditional Western swing–style harmonized lead in the key of D, inspired by Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys. The desired effect is to emulate the sound of a pedal steel guitar, or two conventional guitars playing single notes in harmony with each other.

The lick is played mostly in double-stops on pairs of adjacent strings, and there is some sliding and position shifting required with the fret hand. Use a barre fingering

Standard Tuning - Difficulty: Medium

Performance notes written by GUITAR WORLD

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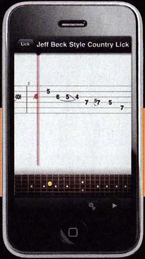
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PS3 | PSP | PlayStation.2
PlayStation
The Official Magazine
VROOOOM!! GT5
Mortal Kombat kicks off the
HUGEST GAMES OF 2011
Twisted Metal | Crysis 2
Deus Ex | Metal Gear Solid
Killzone 3 | The Last Guardian
Batman: Arkham City | Rage
L.A. Noire | Child of Eden
PS3 RESOLUTIONS BLACK
BLOWOUT RESISTANCE 3

"I thought you were dead." "I thought *you* were dead." "I *am* dead!" "So am I!" "Let's hug instead of fighting."

From plus-size princesses to tiny dogs and everything in between, PTOM has got it covered

Email us at PTOM_letters@futureus.com or write to PTOM, c/o Future US Inc., 4000 Shoreline Ct. Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

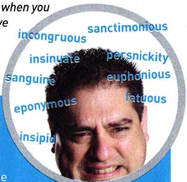
Bothered by Brotherhood

The review for *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* (Issue #41) should have been better. You gave *Assassin's Creed II* a 10, but gave *Brotherhood* a 7. *Brotherhood* improved the gameplay of *Assassin's Creed II*, while adding more story and missions. Also, don't forget *Brotherhood* gave us online. It is one of the finest online multiplayer experiences out there. The online multiplayer is different than other online multiplayer experiences in one important way: Games like *Call of Duty* and *Medal of Honor* just have you running around shooting people, and involves a lot on luck, while *Brotherhood* relies solely on skill.

AUSTIN NOWACK NASHVILLE, TN

So let's get something straight: a 7 is a good score. Sure, it's no 10. But it's still a hearty recommendation to someone who's a fan of the franchise or genre. That said, Brotherhood's *solo campaing just didn't charm us as much as AC2's—it felt rushed and unrefined—and the multiplayer, though innovative, isn't enough to elevate the experience to the lofty bell towers of its predecessors. Also, not sure what you mean when you say* Call of Duty *doesn't involve skill. That bullet we carefully lodged into your brainpan says otherwise.*

Me Read Big Wurdz



I just finished reading your preview on *Need For Speed: Shift 2 Unleashed* (Issue #41) and it sounds awesome. One thing bothered me though. What's with all the big words? To me it seemed like you guys had a thesaurus at your side when you were writing this. And I don't carry around a pocket dictionary, so when I went to read this article I found it a bit tough and I had to read it with my computer in front of me. And I'm not that bad of a reader either. So please make it easier to understand the full story in your upcoming letters. **BRETT YEAGER** PARTS UNKNOWN

Asking Roger to use smaller words is like asking a fat princess to denounce both her royalty and cake. Not gonna happen. In fact, Roger was born with an extra-large noggin just to haul around all his oversized utterances. If they don't come out in his writing, his head explodes—which benefits no one.

Heavy Questions

On page 94 of December's issue, in the best full games for the PlayStation Network, *Fat Princess* was rated third best but scored an 8, while *Flower* was fourth best and had a 9. I was just wondering, after you play a game and review it, do you ever come back and replay a game afterward and think it was better then the rating you gave it?

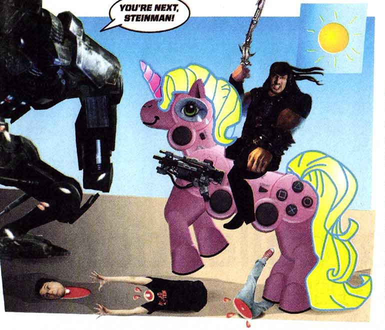
JAKE CURRIE SARNIA, ON, CANADA

Score alone does not dictate where a game might fall on a short list of essentials. Sometimes the sheer weight of a game, its corpulence, its flabulous magnitude, its...fatness, is enough to push it ahead of such pastoral pursuits as those found in ever-so-lovely Flower.

Lucky Son of a B-tch

I just want to share a picture of Lucky, my six-month-old Shih Tzu, holding the latest issue of PTOM. I enjoyed the entire magazine and was happy to find

We welcome reader photos, letters, and stories ("Submissions"), however, we cannot promise to publish any Submission and none will be returned. Neither PlayStation: The Official Magazine ("PTOM") nor Future US, Inc. shall be liable for loss or damage to any Submission. By sending in your Submissions to PTOM you represent and warrant that you own or otherwise have all necessary rights to the Submissions to allow us to publish them in PTOM and as follows. You grant PTOM a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and fully sub-licensable license to use, copy, distribute, publish, modify, adapt, translate, and store, your Submissions, in any form, format, or medium, of any kind now known or later developed and to use your name, likeness, and any other information in connection with the use of the Submission you provide.


YOU'RE NEXT, STEINMAN!

As much as we'd love to blame the Empire, Greg's dismemberment is Roger's doing. When Roger says deadline, he means deadline!

PlayStation
BEST GAMES OF 2011

out that many of my favorite games made the list, such as *Resistance 3*, *Crysis 2*, *Killzone 3*, and *Rage*. However, there was one important omission that I think should have been covered in this issue: *Duke Nukem Forever*. Just the fact that this game is actually going to be released in 2011 deserves the cover itself IMHO, but it wasn't even mentioned at all!

ALFREDO FERNANDEZ NEW JERSEY

We'll skip the easy joke about Duke not coming for another decade and get to the heart of the matter: We simply haven't seen enough of the game to make a call on it. But with Gearbox's recent track record (Borderlands), we're cautiously optimistic.

Daddy Issues

My response to Roger's suggestion that supporting the government regulation of videogames would be "championing—*gasp*—responsibility (Issue #41): That is incorrect. Championing responsibility would be to challenge parents to take responsibility for what their children are exposed to. Our society needs to focus on rebuilding the role of the parent, not taking away obvious parental duties and asking the government to handle them instead.

RON SPRAGUE CHATTANOOGA TN

Ask GARY

Q How do you guys decide what game PTOM will put on its cover for each issue? Do you guys decide on a couple of games and do eeny, meeny, miny, moe?

DUC DAO OXNARD, CA

A Actually, it's significantly more complex than that. The process, which is a closely held secret, involves a never-ending game of Chutes and Ladders played by seasonal migrant workers who are forced to subsist solely on spicy Slim Jims and brackish pond water. Beyond that, I cannot share any more, lest our competition get the jump on us.

Artistic I

I'm 20 years old and I've been a gamer since the original NES. I've seen a lot of conceptual art and graphics through the gaming timelines, but one thing I'd love to see is an artwork drawn by Ken displaying Gary riding a unicorn made of guns and DualShock 3 controllers, wielding Lightning's Gunblade while fighting the huge beast from *The Force Unleashed II*. But you've got to have Greg dismembered on the ground at some point, which brought Gary into his rage initially. Yeah, that sounds right.

DYLAN LEGENDRE EXCEL, AL

Go Team!

I was pleased that you guys included folding@home in your New Year's resolution feature (Issue #41) but you forgot to put the PTOM team number in for people to join us (57353). We are currently ranked 132 in the world. With a little help, we can get back into the top 100.

DOUG T. MISSOULA, MT

Listen Up

In your resolutions feature (Issue #41) one tip was to put CDs in your PS3. I was blown away by the sound quality of the TV and especially the "visual player." Maybe reading your magazine isn't such a bad move.

ALEX HEALY PARTS UNKNOWN

Blu Blues

In some ways the PS3 is getting passed by some of the other Blu-ray players on the market. For example, I bought my parents a Blu-ray player for Christmas and it has very nice YouTube and Pandora apps built into it. On the PS3 we are forced to use the somewhat clunky browser. I would LOVE to see apps appear in the store for download that will do things like stream Pandora or make YouTube even easier to use through the PS3. Do you know if anything like that is coming?

DAVID TAYLOR MCGREGOR, TX

It's true. When the PS3 launched, it wasn't just one of the best Blu-ray players available but also one of the most affordable. Other players have come down in price, though, and include a range of cool extras. We'd love to see something like Last.fm (already on Xbox Live) or Pandora, as well as other applications. On the other hand, there are a tough-to-beat range of streaming and on-demand video options on PS3.

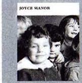
Et Cetera

All the other stuff that distracts PTOM

Criminal

"Midway through the graphic novel collections of Ed Brubaker's *Criminal* series, and I'm loving it more than I expected. No capes, no superpowers, just raw drama and intense action. Who needs mutants and magic when the story is this good?"

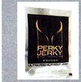
GARY STEINMAN



Joyce Manor

"Just because I personally know these guys doesn't mean their album's not good, right? With 10 short bursts of gritty pop music, their self-titled full length's a crowd pleaser. Take a listen on punknews.org and pick up the album if you like it!"

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH



Perky Jerky

"Since my blood is already infused with excessive levels of caffeine, I can't confirm whether guarana flavoring imparts Perky Jerky with energy-enhancing attributes. But it's tender, moist, and most importantly, tasty. Nomomomom."

ROGER BURCHILL

The League

"Foul-mouthed, low-brow humor that I'd expect from an R-rated *Saturday Night Live* sketch, this raunchy FX show about fantasy football has me hooked. And I don't even play football—fantasy or real-life."

KEN BOUSQUET

PS3 Essential collection

Build the ultimate PS3 library with our no-filler guide to the best next-gen games

PS3
UNCHARTED 2
AMONG THIEVES
NAUGHTY DOG

1

Action Adventure

Uncharted 2
Among Thieves

There's no way around it, Nathan Drake is the PS3's biggest star and *Uncharted 2* is his most impressive adventure yet, with breathtaking action and an incredible story. No excuses: Get it and play it!

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Naughty Dog**

PS3
GOD OF WAR III

2

Action Adventure

God of War III

Huge beautiful battlegrounds and brutally gory fights with magnificent climaxes. We expected the world from the finale of Kratos' trilogy and we got it. A must-have for anyone with even the slightest amount of bloodlust.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Santa Monica Studio**

NEW
PS3
CALL OF DUTY
BLACK OPS
ACTIVISION

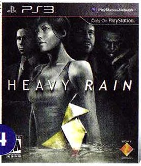
3

First-Person Shooter

Call of Duty
Black Ops

Black Ops improves on *Modern Warfare's* already awesome FPS formula.The franchise is in top form with a brand new single-player story, the beloved zombie mode, and its topnotch online multiplayer.

10 Pub **Activision**
Dev **Treyarch**


PS3
HEAVY RAIN

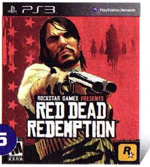
4

Adventure

Heavy Rain

Innovative, intriguing, and immersive, *Heavy Rain* is one of the most original titles in years. The mystery of the Origami Killer will keep everyone guessing until it's solved or the heroes die in the process.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Quantic Dream**


PS3
ROCKSTAR GAMES PRESENTS
RED DEAD REDEMPTION

5

Openworld Shooter

Red Dead Redemption

Continuing with its record of amazing titles, Rockstar's latest openworld game combines a drop-dead gorgeous Old West with a mesmerizing story and fabulous characters.

10 Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar SD/North**

BATMAN
ARKHAM ASYLUM
rocksteady
eidos

6

Action Adventure

Batman
Arkham Asylum

Finally, the Caped Crusader gets the current-gen game he deserves. Use a plethora of bat-gadgets and bat-moves to take back the Joker-controlled Arkham Asylum and love every second of it.

10 Pub **Eidos/Warner Bros.**
Dev **Rocksteady**

METAL GEAR SOLID 4
KONAMI

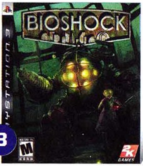
7

Stealth

Metal Gear Solid 4

Hideo Kojima's masterpiece might be criticized for its lengthy cutscenes and convoluted storyline, but that shouldn't stop anyone from experiencing one of the most important games on any platform today.

10 Pub **Konami**
Dev **Kojima Productions**


BIOSHOCK
2K GAMES

8

First-Person Shooter

BioShock

One of the most beautifully designed shooters of all time with an amazing story to boot. Due to the freshness and originality of the first romp through Rapture, we recommend the original over the still magnificent sequel.

10 Pub **2K Games**
Dev **Irrational Games**

PS3
SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV
CAPCOM

9

Fighter

Super Street Fighter IV

An update to the best fighting game from the most well-respected series in gaming history makes for a can't-miss title. Kicking heads and nostalgia combine to form one perfect package.

10 Pub **Capcom**
Dev **Capcom**

NEW
PS3
NEED FOR SPEED
HOT PURSUIT
EA

10

Driving

Need For Speed
Hot Pursuit

The high speed pursuits from the good old days are back and they look better than ever. Race the cops or join them, but the cars are hot either way so don't let that sway which side of the law to select.

10 Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Criterion Games**

Team Choice

Gran Turismo 5

"If you think about it, *Gran Turismo 5* is like a classic British sports car. It's beautiful, drives great, but god, its technical idiosyncracies and snafus will drive you batty. Still, spend some time behind the wheel and you'll fall in love."

Roger Burchill
Managing Editor

Power
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NEW
MASS EFFECT 2

11

Role-Playing

Mass Effect 2

Mass Effect 2 features a spectacular story wrought with intense action and game-changing decisions, and the PS3 version of BioWare's third-person shooter/RPG is the franchise's best. Bring on *Mass Effect 3*!

10 Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **BioWare**

NEW
LittleBIG Planet 2

12

Platformer

LittleBigPlanet 2

Oh Sackboy, how we love thee. The biggest little game on PS3 is rocking our worlds with its sequel. The standard in-game fare is excellent, but it's the ingenious levels crafted by the the fan community that truly amaze and delight.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Media Molecule**

FINAL FANTASY XIII

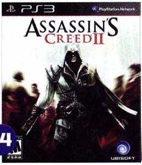
13

Role-Playing

Final Fantasy XIII

It takes a bit of a commitment, but the gorgeous visuals, crazy deep combat, and oh yes, the lovely heroine Lightning, make this lengthy role-playing game more than worth the time it takes to get through it.

10 Pub **Square Enix**
Dev **Square Enix**



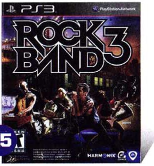
14

Stealth Adventure

Assassin's Creed II

While the first *Assassin's Creed* may not quite have lived up to its full potential, Ubisoft built off what they learned to create the best parkour-influenced stealth game of all time. It doesn't hurt that it's awfully pretty in action either.

10 Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Ubisoft Montreal**



15

Music

Rock Band 3

Didn't think we could pass up the best party game going right now, did you? With a massive songlist and the brilliant new Pro mode, *Rock Band 3* easily overtakes its rival *Guitar Hero* for the top music game on PS3.

9 Pub **EA/MTV Games**
Dev **Harmonix**

NEW
DEAD SPACE 2

16

First-Person Shooter

Dead Space 2

This chilling space horror sequel leaves us jumping at every turn. New enemies, terrifying environments, and the feeling that death is around every corner make this a game worth checking out. Turn out the lights, if you dare.

9 Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Visceral Games**

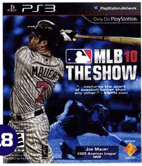
17

Shooter

Killzone 2

One of the best looking PS3 exclusives with fantastic multiplayer and a beautifully polished single-player campaign. Be warned, though: The game's name isn't just cool; it's perfectly fitting. *Killzone 2* can get tough!

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Guerrilla Games**



18

Sports

MLB 10 The Show

The undisputed king of the diamond keeps getting better and better. The key? It's perfect batter/pitcher interface. Deep, rewarding gameplay and a ridiculous amount of polish make it the best sports game around.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **SCE San Diego**

grand theft auto IV

19

Openworld Action

Grand Theft Auto IV

There's a reason why *GTA* sells like crazy. This openworld gangster game is one of the most incredible achievements that the videogame medium has to offer. Great story, great characters, great adventure. Just plain great.

10 Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar North**

Castlevania
Lords of Shadow

20

Action Adventure

Castlevania Lords of Shadow

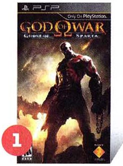
It's sort of like *God of War*, but better, but not as good, too. This *Castlevania* reboot is not only the first great 3D iteration of the long-running series, but an epic adventure in its own memorable right.

9 Pub **Konami**
Dev **MercurySteam**

PSP

Essential collection

PlayStation's 10 best handheld games. Whether on the road or on the couch, just play them.



1

Action Adventure

God of War
Ghost of Sparta

Kratos is back with, what else, a vengeance. *Ghost of Sparta* is the newest addition to the franchise and, trust us, there will be blood in this poignant adventure, with one of the best endings in the entire series.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Ready At Dawn**

2

Action Adventure

God of War
Chains of Olympus

We just had to put both of them on our list. The huge boss fights and memorable puzzles are not lost on the PSP in this larger-than-life series. A must-own for any *God of War* fan.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Ready At Dawn**

3

Platformer

LittleBigPlanet

Aside from being one of the most adorable games ever, *LittleBigPlanet* is also a fully interactive, fully customizable, fully awesome puzzle platformer. This game deserves our full-fledged creative attention.

10 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **SCE Cambridge**

4

Openworld Action

Grand Theft Auto
Liberty City

Some of us fondly remember the first *Grand Theft Auto*. Well, all the sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll our parents warned us about is still alive and well and ready for consumption in this openworld PSP game.

10 Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar North**

5

Puzzle Action

LocoRoco 2

LocoRoco 2 is a huge improvement on its already wonderful predecessor. Solve puzzles and work around the world to save the *LocoRoco*. It's impossible to feel down after hearing the game's infectiously happy soundtrack.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Sony Japan Studio**

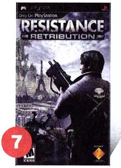
6

Action RPG

Crisis Core
Final Fantasy VII

A *Final Fantasy* fan's collection isn't complete without *Crisis Core*. With gorgeous cutscenes, familiar faces, and action-based role-playing, *Crisis Core* proves epic *does* fit in our hands.

9 Pub **Square Enix**
Dev **Square Enix**



7

Third-Person Shooter

Resistance
Retribution

Resistance: Retribution is a dark third-person shooter that fans of the series will love. Those worried that the series wouldn't transfer well to PSP need not fret one bit—save the fear for the Chimera.

9 Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Bend Studio**

8

Openworld Action

Grand Theft Auto
Chinatown Wars

Take to the streets of Chinatown with the best storyline we've ever experienced in a *GTA* game. The action has a top-down view, but there's no need to look down on this crime-game masterpiece.

9 Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar North**

9

Stealth Action

Metal Gear Solid
Peace Walker

Set 10 years after *Snake Eater*, *Peace Walker* is required playing for *MGS* fans. Offering beautiful cutscenes and a wonderful squad recruitment system, it's almost too solid to be believed.

9 Pub **Konami**
Dev **Konami**

10

Role-Playing

Persona 3
Portable

Fans of *Persona* or other Shin Megami Tensei games will know that any of these titles are bound to be good. This rather controversial RPG translates to the PSP flawlessly.

9 Pub **Atlus USA**
Dev **Atlus**

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PSN Best Games

It's the best of the best! Get the lowdown on this month's PSN goodies no one should live without.

BEST FULL GAMES

1

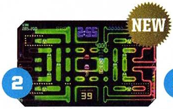
Tricks and Treats

Costume Quest

Sure, it's Halloween themed, but the adventure itself is timeless. With candy and monster-smiting in equal measure, this sugary delight is a charming homage to *Final Fantasy X-2*, enhanced by dev Tim Schafer's unique humor.

9

Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**



2

Retro Revival

Pac-Man Championship Edition DX

There'll always be a place in our hearts for gaming's gluttonous yellow goober—but nostalgia be damned, this retro homage offers a whole new frenetic take on the classic gameplay.

9

Pub **Namco Bandai**
Dev **Namco Bandai**

3

Platforming Puzzle Racer

Joe Danger

A mix of *ExciteBike*-style racing and insane stunt-driven platforming action, this vibrant indie gem shines brightly among the best PSN offerings available. Getting wild and dangerous has never been this awesome.

9

Pub **Hello Games**
Dev **Hello Games**

4

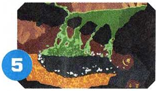
Zen Exploration

Flower

This gorgeous concept game makes blowing hordes of fluttering petals around a lush natural environment into an unforgettable experience that holds up against the biggest triple-A offerings. Don't pass this one up.

9

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**



5

Puzzle Shooter

PixelJunk Shooter

The fourth entry in the *PixelJunk* series is easily the best. Saving trapped mining colonists with a versatile, environmental puzzle-solving ship is a creative and challenging affair taxing both the mind and reflexes.

9

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

BEST DEMOS

1

Third-Person Horror

Dead Space 2

Gruesome things are lurking in the darkness of space—things that require excessive evisceration. Join Isaac Clarke for some serious necromorph curb-stomping action in this grizzly demo that delivers freaky chills and ample gore.

Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Visceral Games**

2

Space Shooter RPG

Mass Effect 2

After being blown up and brought back to life, Commander Shepard wakes up amidst gunfire and alarms. Mount an exciting escape by battling through a doomed space station swarming with killer robots.

Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **BioWare**

3

World-Building Platformer

LittleBigPlanet 2

Dive into some crazy new territory in this adorable romp starring everyone's favorite little Sackdude. Experience a zany taste of robotic animal riding, tower climbing grapple action, and multiplayer rocket flinging goodness.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Media Molecule**

4

Boardgame Warfare

RISK Factions

Featuring a cartoony presentation and oddball combatants, this campaign training exercise offers an introduction to the classic game RISK. See how the objective-based gameplay changes up the old formula.

Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Stainless Games**

5

Handheld RPG Hacking

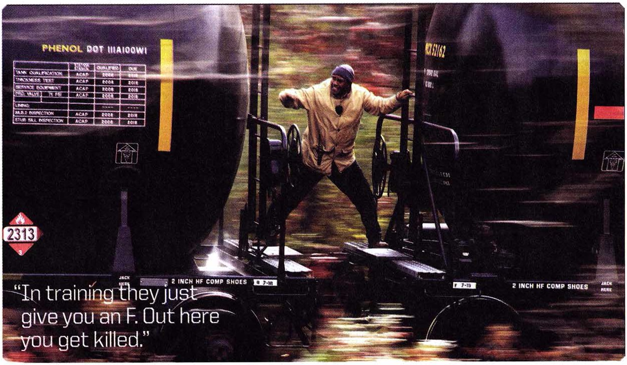
Lord of Arcana (PSP)

Looting caverns and hopping into real-time battles is what draws us to dungeon crawlers, but carving up evil denizens in sprays of blood is the most brutally satisfying part of this portable demo.

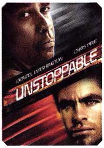
Pub **Square Enix**
Dev **Square Enix**

PSN Video Delivery Service Spotlight

What we're watching on our PS3 this month



> "In training they just give you an F. Out here you get killed."



Unstoppable

ETA **February 15** Rated **PG-13** Genre **Drama / Thriller** Studio **20th Century Fox**

Even in an era where interstellar combat is so last year, there is something compelling about a runaway train movie. Load up the unmanned behemoth with a toxic cargo and the unstoppable locomotive is transformed into *the little engine that could kill us all.* Since FEMA can't be troubled to respond to a crisis within, say, six months, our fave man on fire Denzel Washington and Capt. James Tiberius Kirk v2.0 Chris Pine take up the hot pursuit—which makes it easy to understand why we're hopping aboard for this ride.

Top VDS Downloads

Movies

Inception
The Town
The Twilight Saga: Eclipse
The A-Team
The Expendables

TV Shows

The Walking Dead: Season 1
Family Guy: Season 9
Sons of Anarchy: Season 3
Smallville: Season 10
Supernatural: Season 6

BEST FREE STUFF

1

Real-Time Strategy

R.U.S.E. Manhattan Project pack

This free expansion add-on brings the power of nukes to the table and encourages players to fire it all up with two awesome new multiplayer modes and three new maps to battle across.

Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Eugen Systems**

2

Third-Person Assassination

AC Brotherhood Animus Project 1.0

A new *Assassin's Creed* map loaded with high perches, and multilevel structures to slay through is only half of the fun here. The other treat is a tougher Advanced Alliance multiplayer mode.

Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Ubisoft Montreal**

3

Third-Person Adventure

Uncharted 3 BTS #1: The Reveal

Go behind-the-scenes for an up-close-and-personal look at the making of *Uncharted 3*—the first part of a documentary chronicling the Naughty Dog dev team's creative approach and process.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Naughty Dog**

4

Open-World Investigation

L.A. Noire trailer

Oozing grit and personality from its every pore, this teaser trailer sets the new Rockstar game's tone perfectly with a foot chase through dark city streets. This classic detective tale appears packed with murder and wailing jazz.

Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Team Bondi**

5

First-Person Flashback

Battlefield BC2 Vietnam trailer

Torrents of bullets and geysers of deadly flame make this explosive teaser for *Battlefield: Bad Company 2's* Vietnam-era expansion an unforgettable time trip to a distant war zone.

Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **DICE**

Viruses

When it comes to apocalyptic scenarios, nothing beats a good virus

FOXDIE

Metal Gear Solid

Prognosis: Death

Originally a man-made virus created by the Pentagon to kill designated targets by recognizing their DNA. Solid Snake got a dose in *MGS* to take out ArmsTech president Kenneth Baker and the rogue FOXHOUND team. But as the cloned soldier aged, the virus degraded, threatening to kill anyone, not just Snake. Fortunately, Drebin 893 injected him with a newer strain in *Metal Gear Solid 4*, halting the degradation and saving us all.

Forced Evolutionary Virus

Fallout 3

Prognosis: Various mutations

Way back before the apocalypse that turned America into a toasty glowing dust bowl, the United States funded research into boosting the human immune system. The result was the Pan-Immunity Virion Project. A complete success...apart from the mutations: increased muscle mass, decreased intelligence, and green skin. The military loved it though, and tried to use it to create super soldiers but ultimately made the Super Mutants.

The Genophage

Mass Effect 2

Prognosis: Infertility

Impress everyone by telling them "geno" refers to specific genetic makeups and "phage" is a fancy word for virus. So, like FOXDIE, this is a disease that targets specific DNA—in this case, the entire race of war-hungry Krogans. However, rather than kill them, it makes viable pregnancies almost impossible, sending the species toward a slow extinction. Far more distressing, however, is the resulting black market dealing in Krogan testicles, which are believed (falsely) to cure the virus.

T-Virus

Resident Evil

Prognosis: Zombification, mutation

This is the Gucci of deadly mutating viruses and the one every other knockoff, wannabe disease looks up to. Zombies, lizard creatures, peeled dogs, lumbering mutant abominations—it does it all, with style. Word of warning: For those planning to try it out, don't set up a lab anywhere near, say, a massively populated city. That sort of thing goes down pretty poorly with the World Health Organization.

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